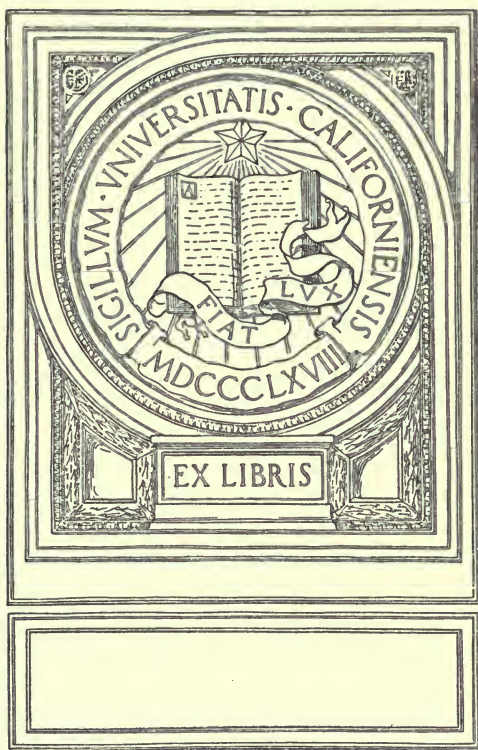


THE POT BOILS

M. STORM JAMESON



M





THE POT BOILS

THE POT BOILS

A NOVEL

BY

STORM JAMESON

LONDON

CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD.

#61

581

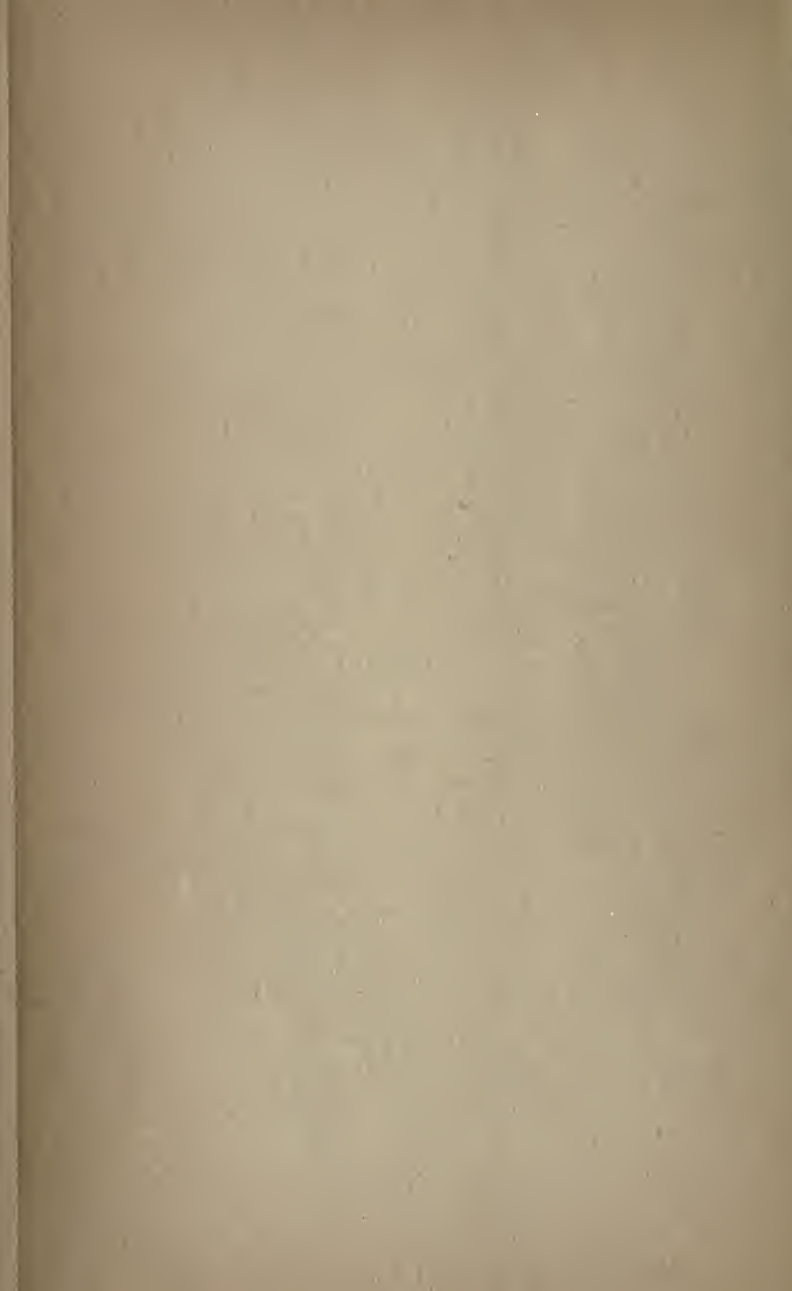
per

First Published, 1919

THE NEW
AMERICAN

DEDICATED
TO THE MAN
WHO KEPT THE COFFEE STALL
AT THE
WOOD LANE END OF SHEPHERD'S BUSH GREEN
DURING THE
WINTER OF 1913-14
IN TOKEN
OF GRATITUDE.

M134725



BOOK I

THE NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER I

THE yellow roses drooped in the stifling air. A group of students, entering the café, were vastly decorous while they took possession of a table that looked out upon the swinging arc-lights of the street below. Their cheerful wrangling, at first subdued, became quickly careless: one of them laughing loudly, left the rest to join three aggressive women at the next table. The watch-chains of two wool merchants, members of the ruling middle class for whose tastes had been created the vile gilt panelling of the room, quivered with their wrath. It was not only that they detested students and their blatant methods: this they did as a matter of class principle. But they had been about to offer heavy favours at that very table, and were not a little annoyed by the necessity for fresh thought, an effort always so painful to them that during every strike of their ill-paid hands, no solution occurred to them save a brilliant plan to shoot the leaders and suppress Trade Unions by law.

The students meanwhile had caught sight of a man who hesitated in the doorway. Richard Thurlow was regretting his promise to join them: he had already turned to go, and at their noisy greeting walked un-

willingly towards the table. Someone was just finishing a tale amid shouts of laughter: a theological student hastened to cap it with one more indecent and less witty. This he did to prove his liberality of mind and greatness of soul, holding that the Church, if it is to be as great a success as the music-halls, must make room for every phase of Humanity. It was not apparent that he laboured to admit anything save obscenity and foul living. It is possible that he scorned his nobler impulses as being too easy of fulfilment: in any case, an abstract noun is a slippery thing and one should not be too precise with lovers of Humanity.

His story achieved ironical success. "Good old Starling, his graces are wasted on a jackpriest. Aren't you ashamed to be preaching a faith founded on parthenogenesis, with a chief rite that goes back to primitive cannibals, drinking men's blood in the hope of absorbing their virtue? D'you believe in immortality, Starling?"

The ecclesiastical smile became more foolish.

"No."

"Of course he doesn't: he'll never get through this life decently, and what would he do with another and longer one? What, for that matter, would any of us do with it?"

"Life," said Starling, "is a continual progress to higher things." He was interrupted nervously.

"Life, you fool, is a continual progress to more complicated lies. . . ."

Denarbon's had too much to drink. . . ."

Denarbon turned angrily. The lines of dissatisfaction on his thin face became more marked. A mass of fair hair, brushed untidily back, made his slight form appear somehow top-heavy.

"I'm not drunk," he said, "and I'm not fooling. Life is a series of lies from that first unconscious lying when fear made the gods. After that was the conscious deception of the priests who conducted the Mysteries. Then came Christ, who lied out of His great pity.

"Afterwards the Popes, hungry for gold, and flesh, claimed power over men's souls and bodies, and supported their claims by lies and blood. And when Rome failed, the German monk and the sadist of Geneva bound half Europe in the chains of a false faith of good works. And almost before men began to shake their chains, came all the cant of Empire, and hard on its heels, the lawyers that still rule the age, and bloody-minded financiers. They have made such a maze of lies to secure themselves that men may well despair. Press and Parliament and University feed on their lies. They teach lying economics, they pay lying priests. Their triumph has been so easy that some of them are growing fat and careless. And one of their lies, the cant of mutual interest between working-man and capitalist, is so weak that even the working-man is at last seeing through it. Hence I foresee a revival of far subtler deception on the part of lawyers and financiers. They will forestall the slow wits of Trade

Union leaders by the lollipops they will offer men to keep quiet. We approach the birth of the glorious Arch-liar, the new maker of a new god, the divinity within the capitalist. And the working-man, like the monks of Mount Athos, may sit down and contemplate his own navel, growing slowly more sweet and rounded in the enjoyment of free food, free houses, and free wives. And the few wise men may boil in pitch, with the one Trade Union official who did not run to lick the capitalist's big toe. . . ."

"You garrulous old fool," interrupted someone wearily.

"In that glorious era—now by the grace of Heaven and the Fabian Society drawing so happily near—we shall all be slaves in a new kingdom, ruled by a new aristocrat. Caste will be recreated: the modern cant of equality, born of the discovery that all men carry the metaphysical ghost of a tail, and a prehensile foot, will disappear. All forms of cant die, but this one in its death will stink to heaven, and the new order will reverse every previous theory of Caste. The trader, the plutocrat at the top, will rule through his servants the priests, the thinkers, and the pseudo-governors in the House of Commons. Then Starling and Weston there will flourish: the parson will preach the divinity of Thugstein, the Oil King: and the economist will turn souteneur to Thugstein's lust for human sacrifice. . . . Curse you, Thurlow, what are you grinning at?"

Thurlow looked at his friend. "I was smiling at your man-eating deity, worshipped by pale intellectuals and drunken parsons. And I don't see that Thugstein's triumph is so sure. Suppose a man clever enough to see through lawyer and financier—not a very large supposition—strong and subtle enough to defeat them by crying abroad the horror of the new slavery: do you think such an one would not find support and power?"

"The capitalist would always find another thinker to pit against your super-pamphleteer...."

Weston spoke hurriedly, still flushing under Denarbon's sneer: his round cheerful face expressed frank bewilderment. He was a student of economics, and, good soul, thought Sidney Webb an audacious pioneer. The beer he had drunk roused him to an unwonted mental energy.

"And why not erect such a caste system? Where are the brains, the initiative, the foresight of the modern state if not in the capitalist class? I see no reason why the mass of the people should not be well-fed and efficient slaves. After all, they are servile-minded, and there is little good and much harm in disturbing them with visions of a power they are not fit to use. Far better lead them gently into a satisfied servility: feed them, look after their sick, amuse them, and what more will they want?"

"What more would any of us want?" Denarbon jeered.

There was a sudden silence. Then a thin-haired medical said dreamily, "I'll tell you what I want to do. I'd like to have children by every breed of woman, Hindu, Fijian, Spanish, Basque—all kinds : and then I'd like to bring them up in one nursery, and watch the effect of a common environment. . . . Thurlow, I suppose, will help his half-brother to send up the million and a half circulation of his vile Tory newspaper. What about you, old man ? "

Denarbon hesitated. "I shall have two hundred pounds when I leave coll. . . . I can't afford to go to Paris, but I can study modelling in London. . . . I have the idea of a great bronze ' Strife.' " He was interrupted by a babble of ironical advice.

"I should paint seductive females for magazines, if I were you : you'll find it pay better. . . ."

"After all, it's a woman's age. . . ."

Denarbon was suddenly depressed. "I daresay you are right," he said, "the novels are written for women and their vanity, or authors would not drag out the same worn theme : one wooing's very like another—to a man ! Art is swayed by woman, or Rodin would never have made that endless sickly ' Kiss,' nor would rhythmical hysteria have demoralised the younger painters. . . ."

Nilson, the thin-haired medical student, swore absently at women medicals, curates, and others of the third sex. Denarbon did not hear him.

"I hate these women," he said. "Look at them.

They've forced their way into industry and cut men's wages down to starvation level : such of them as have attained a degree of intellect affect an insufferable conceit and spread their imitated ideas all over literature. They're in the way : man made society in the past : how is he going to remake it, hampered by woman in search of a soul ? The needs of her spirit ! . . . Only an ugly woman can have a soul and that through much pain and suffering. A beautiful woman has none until an artist creates one in her : her very grace of motion is his gift. She lives in his eyes : if there were no artist in man there would be no lovely women."

" Then why talk about them ? "

Weston's unexpected common sense silenced the artist. Starling and Nilson quarrelled incoherently : the heat of the room became intolerable. Through the smoke a woman smiled at Thurlow : he looked away across the confusion of the table. Denarbon was sitting moodily silent : Nilson, breathless and flushed, repeated : " The devil take you, you reverend vice. Preach, curse you, and convert us." Starling stood up, leaning against the wall and began a sermon.

" The desire for immortality, friends, is a disease peculiar to slaves and women. It feeds on the fear seen in the eyes of middle-aged men when the thought of death creeps at them in their sleepless nights. . . . Here comes La Belle Heaulmaire," he said abruptly.

“Be quiet, you fool.” Nilson pulled him violently down.

A dark, large-limbed woman came through the curtains into the room. Her green gown revealed the line of her body so plainly that she could only be a high born or a light o’ love. She was indeed the daughter of a French mill-owner who settled in England after his wife’s death. Her father died before her twentieth year, leaving his daughter a taste for expensive culture, and a few hundred pounds. She might have taught in a girls’ boarding school at forty pounds a year : she might have married a repulsive little banker whom her sombre beauty pleased. She did neither of these honourable things : she took a suite of rooms in a small hotel and received there the town’s wealthy citizens. Some young fool named her *La Joyeuse* : she made herself difficult of access and was valued the more highly by the middle-aged married men who sought her. Nilson’s adroitness got him an introduction, but could not buy her favours. Intellect, alas, retreats before moneyed respectability even in these small matters : it is the custom of the age.

La Joyeuse was accompanied by the solicitor who had been her first lover : she felt for him a reminiscent affection. They passed the silent students and she made careless acknowledgment of Nilson’s greeting : her glance, turning from him, rested on Thurlow. His was a type of face not uncommon among the English “*intelligentsia*”—thin, narrowing from broad temples

to a rounded chin, mouth of a sorrowful faun, intent eyes beneath a clumsy forehead. La Joyeuse took the nearest table, and smiled at the desirous medical student. When he went to her, delighted and surprised, she said abruptly, "Bring your friend"—and looked at Thurlow. In his confusion, Nilson inadvertently made the introduction in Thurlow's actual name. The others, amused at the blunder, leaned forward to listen.

La Joyeuse, more bored than usual by the routine of her trade, permitted herself an errant desire. Thurlow pleased her by the carriage of his dark head upon a long muscular body. She tried adroitly to attract him by talking of her library, of which she was vain, and described her exquisite copies of some twelfth-century *chansons de geste*, printed and bound for her to the designs of a French artist, her father's friend. There was a "Charroi de Nimes" in white vellum, with a single emerald set in its golden clasp: a "Huon de Bordeaux," on the cover of which the artist himself had painted the faery monarch, riding through a shadowy forest sunk in the deep blue night. Denar-bon, moving quietly, opened a window: a cool breeze came across the table. The sound of excited voices, growing fainter, passed into the rustling of summer leaves: Nicolette, her feet whiter than the daisies, trod on the smooth grass: faery knights rode to old tournaments down dim green ways. La Joyeuse shivered: a waiter shut the window: somewhere in

the café a woman broke into shrill laughter. The conversation died down at the little table : La Joyeuse, rising to go, invited Thurlow to see her books. " Come to-morrow afternoon," she said, " about three o'clock. You know where I live ? " The solicitor, following her, looked at Thurlow with amused interest.

At the students' table Weston wanted to drink to his happiness. Starling, too drunk for caution, remarked sadly, " It's no use, darling, everybody knows that Thurlow doesn't like the woman by the wayside : he's been nice-minded from birth. . . . "

" Swine," said Denarbon, and then, " I'm tired of this. Thurlow, are you coming ? "

They went out together. Five minutes later, an exasperated manager kicked Starling into the street : he went uncomplaining, latest of the Church's sainted martyrs : the others, leaving shortly after, found him clutching in fierce embrace the statue of a naked woman in the City Square, imploring her to pity him, since pity is the first of the Christian virtues.

Thurlow and Denarbon walked quickly through the empty streets of the business quarter.

" I'm tired of that crowd," Denarbon said irritably. " God knows why I don't cut it." Thurlow agreed. " I came to-night to satisfy you," he said.

" When I'm there I forget to wonder what the devil I can do for a living, when my money gives out. That fool was quite right : I'd better paint rosy women for a living. Sculptors aren't made in a year. What I've

done so far—by myself—is so hideously faulty that I've taken to modelling clay animals for the landlady's little girl." He stopped abruptly. "I've lost my Theocritus," he went on, "and two theological men use the library copy every day, reading it without a key, so that they won't miss anything. Curse them. Can I have yours?"

They parted at the door of Thurlow's rooms. As he went, Denarbon said: "Are you going to call on that woman to-morrow?"

"Why not?" the other answered, "an experience. . . ."

La Joyeuse had half repented of her whim when he came. She gave him tea in thin blue cups, and he talked to her gravely of Ronsard and Villon. The room was one of her artistic whims: heavy green rugs covered the smooth green tiles of the floor: the hot sun came through curtains of iridescent green and blue: from one wall a pale virgin of Cimabue looked down upon the deep couch, covered with a chintz of shimmering peacocks and blue-green myrtle leaves.

"This is my summer room," she said, touching curtains and books with her small plump hands. She told him stories of her trade, laughing like a child over the decorous absurdities of one middle-aged lover, and the habit of mind that compelled another to ask for a receipt. Then she would have him talk of his life, and he told her that he meant to work on his half-brother's paper "The Morning News." "That is

why I came here rather than to Oxford or Cambridge. I thought that I should be nearer real life in this filthy industrial town. . . ." He stopped abruptly, catching at the unspoken words, that the student's vision of real life is in singular contrast with the presumably high level of his intellect : it does not often go beyond beer and light women, and Thurlow disliked one, and was bored by the other.

La Joyeuse talked of a childhood in Marseilles. Her culture and reading, of which she greatly exaggerated the extent, interested her far less than the memories of childish triumphs. She reflected at the same time that she had shown sufficient favour to this young man, who did not seem inclined to ask for further grace. At the end of half an hour he took his leave, almost unconscious of refusing a proffered gift.

CHAPTER II

IN the earliest years of the century Socialism sneaked into the University in the wake of the crude Liberalism of wool-merchants' sons, and the missionary circles of the women students. The few existing Socialists, alarmed by their sudden popularity, became further uneasy as the new-born babe burst from its swaddling clothes an unmistakable changeling. It tore at industrial history, absorbing facts as easily as Martin Scriblerus, that famous savant, learned the Greek alphabet before he could speak or toddle, by eating ginger-bread blocks stamped with the letters. He is said to have eaten as far as Gamma on the first attempt: these young Webb-footed criminals, easily outpacing him, were confuting Marx in a week, and venturing timid opposition to their professor of economics within a year. He, unhappy wretch, was seriously upset by the sudden appearance at his classes of earnest females in large numbers. They copied his remarks into enormous notebooks with an ill-disguised scorn that woke unwonted fury in his gentle soul. He thought sadly of the time when he gathered four or five cheerful young men round the fire in his private room and lectured tolerantly on the

basis and policy of mediæval guilds. He peered at those four young men, huddled together in a corner of the class-room, and through six joyous lectures proved the necessity for the economic subjection of women.

The evil spread. A Society for Social Work was formed, and parties of men and women visited work-houses and factories, torturing their pilgrim souls by the contemplation of down-trodden humanity. They entreated leave to view one of the model villages on a certain ducal estate, and, gazing on the outside of the cottages, were infected with the divine madness at the sight of so much cleanliness and beauty. A cottage, specially scoured and polished, was thrown open to them by an explanatory agent. One thin young man, devoured by the itch for interference that later got him place and favour in the Fabian Society, walked uninvited into the insanitary and foul interior of a cottage in its normal state : his long ears received a sad tale of drunkenness and immorality, told by the same agent. Presumably God winked the other eye : certainly the ducal agent did. Later the company picnicked in the recesses of a ducal wood : lanky women pursued men whose hearts belied the glib feminism of their tongues. The agent was possessed by a deeply dramatic sense of humour which he was rarely able to satisfy. He gave it now its unstinted fill, making an elaborate and unnecessary play for its greater pleasure. A venerable peasant, well washed in the parts that show, came and gathered sticks where

sticks had never been gathered before : two of the more earnest young women, remembering their Morris, approached to stroke his hands. It is unlikely that the grey-haired fool had ever read the "News from Nowhere" : he fled incontinent, and fear hid in his eyes for many days.

The few pioneer Socialists, unspeakably dismayed, withdrew from the herd, lest more luckless than Actæon, they should be enticed into marrying these Dianas of the soul. On their disappearance, the new believers divided and subdivided into committees, like worms cut by a spade, and reported upon local industries until they became so unpopular that factory-owners refused to admit their delegations. With that, their eagerness drooping, they looked round and discovered the Fabians. The tide of Fabianism was sweeping over England and thinning as it spread. It has ebbed and left a few local societies high and dry in dismal cafés. But at this time it was at its full.

The Fabian Society arose to satisfy the need for a version of Socialism that could safely be admitted into drawing-rooms. It could be trusted to comport itself with gentility : it knew the uses of a table napkin. More than this, it satisfied a need of Socialism itself.

All faiths travel the same path : trailing at first the radiance of the skies, arrogant, uncompromising, cloud-beset. Afterwards comes the craving for firm

ground, a dispassionate search for facts. Maps must be made of the land, spies sent forward, and materials got for building the kingdom of God on earth. So came Bacon into philosophy, and so the Fabians into Socialism. Lastly come the master-architects, building in knowledge of the past and prevision of the future. Or else disorder and decay.

The heaped-up facts of the patient spies remain heaps, bricks got together by men who can build little houses and do not know that a city is more than a multitude of houses. They have no meaning. They are : but they produce nothing of good or evil for man. They are barren. They are the clay before the statue was formed even in Pygmalion's mind. On every side press and surge the facts of life. They beat against the five doors of the human brain. They are not understood until the brain has reduced them to the common denominator of man. So the savage looked out on a purposeless world and straightway endowed it with a purpose and a meaning, hearing the voice and seeing the hand of his gods in all natural things. So in the hands of Ibsen the facts of life have a meaning for all men, and in the hands of Arnold Bennett they remain lumps of fact with no significance save the particular and the momentary.

The world is old and the surface of life is riddled with dead thoughts and deeds. And as to every faith, so to every man is a time when the passion to know, the craving to see and hear and learn things is fiercer

than the passion to be anything or to do anything. Some minds, some ages, live and die in this passion. It is one of the fiercest needs of humanity. It is as fierce as the need to eat. The man who lives to eat and the man who lives to know are at the same stage of immature humanity.

It is a stage of earnest youth. The students who discovered the Fabian Society were ravening for the facts of the social order. They renamed themselves the Society for Fabian Study and seized on the Fabian books and tracts as fast as they were published. Scepticism came later, with Richard Thurlow and his generation. "We know all the footnotes in our Webb," Thurlow said scornfully, "we have pried into every workman's dwelling where there was no one to kick us out." They did in fact haunt tenements. During a coal strike they enrolled themselves as volunteer workers for the C.O.S. They tramped all day through the wilderness of slums that rolled sluggishly back from the river, dinnerless, with bellies full of enthusiasm, doling out cocoa and half-crowns, and asking, always asking questions.

"Have you pawned everything you can pawn?"

"Why do you have so many children?"

"What makes you think it's wicked to limit your family? I'd like to understand your point of view."

It was not an unkind curiosity. It was not always, nor even often, morbid. But it was entirely heartless.

It had nothing to do with the humanities. It had almost as little to do with science. It filled for a time their youthful maw for facts about life, torn off bleeding and quivering and swallowed raw.

Some minds pass quicker than others through this stage of detached curiosity. Some never pass out of it at all. The Society for Fabian Study was rent by shameful and heretical wrangles.

It had established a deliberate unconventionality in its meetings. The men smoked, sitting or sprawling where they pleased. The women sat rather uncomfortably in twos and threes about the room.

Weston was a single-minded Fabian. He pored over the Fabian remedies for poverty. He caressed them, dwelling on their perfections, a neophyte awed and reverent in the presence of the master. Richard Thurlow, with not half Weston's knowledge of social conditions, towered above him in the imagination of the students. He was a rebel. His habit of thought led him away from massed attack to a delight in erratic sallies. He walked round Weston and stuck arrows in him. Weston, often conscious of his right and Thurlow's error, was helpless before the rapidity of the thrusts. He retreated before Thurlow's skill in phrase-making, angry and bewildered. Thurlow's mind teemed with useless and fantastic theories. These he poured out with a gravity of manner that

compelled his listeners to treat them seriously. Then he laughed at them. At one meeting he put forward a scheme for the regulation of wives by income. "Let six labourers earning a pound a week," he said, "have one wife among them and provide jointly for her offspring. And every rich man be compelled to support a wife for each five thousand pounds of his income." A flurry of argument arose on the instant and died in a sudden silence. A women student walked out. Weston stammered: "You needn't give Thurlow the pleasure of taking him seriously. He's only talking. It's a habit of his."

As Weston surveyed his piles of facts he felt the sense of superior power. He yearned to tidy up the muddle of slums. He had eyes to see the muddle. He burned to enter it god-like from above, sweep, order, frame rules, compel obedience and a clean and tidy life. He was passionately sincere. He stood high up on his knowledge and looked down on the struggling poor as on a tribe of scurrying insects. Instinctively he conceived of them as a different race. He never saw the power in them, but only its disconnected and turbulent upthrusts. Their objection to supervision seemed to him mere obstinacy. He wanted to clear roads for them. He did not want to give them picks and shovels and training to clear their own paths. Because the workers had failed politically he thought it a failure of their own inherent weakness. He could not see that it might be the failure of strength

spending itself in a blind alley. He wanted to wangle politics on their behalf. He believed in the existing political powers and he dreamed of pushing and pulling them until they in turn pushed and pulled the people below into an orderly and contented existence.

“One half of England formed into committees to govern the other, and no youthful intellectual hindered from a statistical and meddlesome life.” Thurlow leaned across and tapped his pipe against the bars of the fireplace.

Weston answered impatiently. “Oh, take that away,” he said. “I don’t want to form committees. Why can’t you work through the existing authorities? Mayors and town clerks and things. Give ’em baronetcies for social reform, and that sort of thing, you know.”

“But what’ll you do when knights and peers are as common as fleas and not so industrious?”

“Wage boards. Arbitrate. Discuss. Get workers and employers talking.”

Thurlow laughed. “Wage boards—composed of ordinary men—like you and me—persuading the softened capitalist to grant a living wage out of his wicked profits.”

“The lion and the lamb,” Denarbon added joyously, “couching together in sweet industrial innocence.”

They could not keep off the question of women and

women's work. But they shut it out as much as possible. When it was dragged in the whole company became uneasy. The men who spoke affected an enthusiasm or a violent misogyny which they did not feel. They were surprised to find themselves talking like lyrical feminists, or else in a discourteous and blatant scorn of women. The women themselves were either silent, or voluble and arrogant.

"Women," Weston said once, "ought to be driven into the fields and factories for the good of their health."

There were shrill cries of dissent. A girl, sitting alone in the shadows by the door, interrupted coolly.

"You needn't get excited," she said. "Mr. Weston doesn't want to drive us into factories and fields. He means poor women. Cheap blacklegs, you know."

She flushed at the laugh that greeted the thrust. In the darkening room her face seemed wholly childlike in its round smoothness. Not even the broad forehead and an unexpected squareness of jaw took much from the prevailing youthful roundness. Her eyes, grey and abnormally large, were nervously intent. Richard Thurlow looked across at her. His eyes were half-closed and smiling. An answering smile flickered across her gravity and was gone in an instant.

Thurlow sat brooding. Later he broke violently into a discussion on government. "You set of fools,"

he said, "what makes you think you can correct abuse by means of the greatest of abuses? Government *is* abuse. It's abuse in its very beginning. Give into the hands of any set of men the power to govern their fellows, and then beg them not to abuse it. Whine at them, threaten them. You'll punish them when they come out of office, will you? Will you? You'll push holes in water sooner. Why, you lunatics, they *never* come out of office. And wealth and birth will still rule the rulers. Don't deceive yourselves. The whole idea of government from above is wrong. It's worse, it's rotten and a source of rottenness in others."

When the meeting broke up, the girl slipped out ahead of the crowd of students. Along the darkened corridors Thurlow caught her up. "Athenais," he said, "it would be absurd to begin work now: let's get a rug and walk out to our little wood."

"Very well."

She had the air of regarding him as part of an absurd adventure.

In the warm dusky blue of a summer sky, the first dim stars wavered, went out, and reappeared. Outside the town they met a little wind that slipped past them down the valley. They ran laughing down the steep hill from the last houses, and came over short grass and pale folded flowers to the stream. It gleamed darkly beside them as they walked along narrow paths and through the sleeping fields to the star-tipped darkness of the trees. The living silence of the forest

fled their eager feet. Athenais, shining-eyed, stopped to listen. A wandering wind shook the upper branches and died upon the silence, like the far-off whisper of the sea upon flat rocks. The sound of waters falling crept upon their ears. Trees and waterfall were part of them, breathing beside them in the darkness, shaken by the force that shook them.

ThurLOW took her in his arms and kissed her face and throat, palely gleaming in the darkness. Then, stumbling over the roots of trees, they came past the lights of an enchanted house into a path that wound through narrow climbing lanes beyond the wood. The hedge became a low wall. They climbed over the crumbling stones, crossed a sloping field, and there within the shadow of a smaller, hidden wood, spread their rug beneath low-hanging branches.

Her head lay in the hollow of his shoulder and her arm was flung across him. He lifted his head from the ground to kiss her hair. She rested against him with a murmur of content, unafraid of the body pressed to hers.

Shadows of sleep flitted across the darkness. Silence slipped between the trees, and fell across their lips, and in a little while they slept.

Athenais woke. Grey winds of dawn were blowing in the half-light. She shivered, and the movement roused ThurLOW. He pulled the rug more closely round them and lay watching the eastern sky.

“Thea, how long is it since we found this place?”

"Nearly a month," she told him.

"Why don't more people know that a hard bed under the sky is better than a soft one indoors?"

"Should we have known if we hadn't fallen asleep in the wood the night we were both so tired?"

"Thea," he said, sitting up to see her more clearly, "did you know you were falling asleep that night?"

She hesitated. "I think I did . . . in a drowsy fashion . . . but I was very comfortable . . . and tired. Besides I didn't think we'd sleep like that. . . ."

"You were desperately worried when we woke and found the dawn looking at us through the trees, though you tried hard to hide it. . . ."

"I was thinking of my landlady. Besides . . ."

"Besides—what?"

She did not answer.

"Besides, I love you," he said, and kissed her very gently.

Remembering suddenly the Society for Fabian Study he laughed happily.

"You know," he said, "my only feeling last night during the meeting was an overwhelming sense of its futility. During Weston's babble and my own, I felt the—the spirit of our thought struggling to get through the stupid words. I had an insane idea that the whole problem of life would disappear if you could but see the naked minds of all these people only for a moment.

. . . Wherever a mind is active, whether for Fabian reform or Socialism or Autocracy, for beauty of form and colour, for rebellion and strife, there is the same deep confused prompting—the world struggling to be free along a thousand dim paths. . . .”

“It would seem,” said Thea, “that life has her moments of blind insanity or she would not try to work through Mr. Weston and his kind.”

“No,” Thurlow answered. “It’s not life that is wrong, but we who do not understand her. The key is lost. Once we were blood-worshippers, then sun-worshippers, then worshippers of the One True God. Now the gods are dying, and the Superman is not born. . . . It was easy to jeer at Weston’s factory health-resorts, but how alter things so that women need not go there? Deeper than that into life—how find name and form for the snake gnawing the roots? Weston would cry, “Private Capitalism” like the wellbred parrot that he is. But what beneath and behind the Plutocrat? We must find some answer for ourselves, sweetheart, before we can do anything.”

Along the eastern sky the clouds were fringed with gold. Slender shafts of light faced the last thin shadows of the west, and were lost in the shifting glory of the dawn. Life waited for them in the shadows of the valley, flung a hand above the radiant hills. Their eager words ran to meet her across the tops of the beech trees. When the first level rays

slipped through the trees, they crossed the heavy grass and went slowly down the road.

At the door of her rooms, Athenais, turning the latchkey carefully in the lock, disappeared into the silent house, and Thurlow walked rapidly down the echoing street.

CHAPTER III

HENRY DENARBON untwisted its wet cloth from the unfinished head and shoulders on which he had worked for three nights. An abandoned Theocritus lay face downwards on the floor : in one corner an inadequate bed sagged under the weight of a decrepit Latin dictionary and a fatuous lay figure. The head itself, modelled from an Italian workman in the room above, rested upon Thurlow's Greek lexicon, borrowed a year ago. The cloth fell off and it stood revealed, curiously square and harsh. Denarbon looked at it with a dissatisfaction passing into swift resentment. "It might have been hacked out with a fire-shovel," he said. A sudden anger distorted his face : he dragged at the Greek lexicon, and brought it down upon the fallen head with nervous fury, battering the clay into formless nonentity, like Yahweh repenting his creation of man.

Satisfied, he stepped backwards onto something that crunched beneath his foot. It was a small clay dog, brought to him for a new leg. "That's no more use," he reflected ruefully, "and the infant will cry." From a fragment of the battered clay he began to model another dog. It became a zebra and he made the

markings in Indian ink with great care. Before it was finished and set to harden the light had failed. He stood peering out of the window ; then, on some impulse, turned to look for his hat. It eluded him, and he went without it, banging the doors because he was cheerful.

Some months ago, Denarbon had formed a friendship with the only woman student in his Greek classes. She was a plump dark-skinned girl older than most of the women students and not without brains. On rare days, Denarbon would walk her rapidly two or three miles into the country and back again : at other times, he hardly spoke to her, and seemed to forget that she lived. During these walks, which not seldom lasted beyond midnight, he talked, with hardly a pause, spreading out before her his hatred of the ruling classes, his insane theories of life, even his contempt for her sex. It is to be supposed that she realised his view of her as a detached ear, for she heard his scorn of women in sombre silence. At the same time he would bring her up roundly on some such remark : " You know your texts twice as well as most of the men, but if you were set to original research you'd fail, after a certain point." But he did not often talk of women, and sometimes would walk in a spiritless silence, breaking at last into open despair. " I belong to the incompetents of the first class," he told her, " not good enough to do anything worth doing—too good to be unaware of failure." Once she ventured

pity: it irritated him intensely, and he did not go near her during many weeks.

Seeking her out now, he took her out beyond the town by the way that Thurlow and Athenais had gone the night before. But at the bottom of the first hill, they turned away from the stream, and climbed the steep field across the valley. A belligerent wind drove heavy clouds across the stars. Over the rise of the field, a group of trees clashed and shivered through all their branches. Denarbon, excited by the coming storm, waved his arms and ruffled his grotesque hair, at the height of his own argument.

"The savage, wiser than we, worshipped genius in the shape of the wizard, who foretold the thunder. Later, when the gods fled from earth to the sky, he tore the body of a sacred victim and watered his fields with the blood of dim, forgotten Christs. When he became more humane, he sacrificed criminals, among them Jesus the Nazarene. . . . It is not long since the Gonds were sacrificing Brahmin boys, chosen for their sacred birth. . . . Nowadays we're so damned humane that we let genius scatter its blood without our help. If his verse be sufficiently aphrodisiac, if his research become popular enough, we take him to our beating hearts and let him put a finger in our pockets."

"Masefield," she said, venturing.

"I was talking of genius, but no matter," the nervous hand dismissed her. "It's not only the individual who suffers, but the genius of the race. The

French Revolution was a crime for which the world must pay with more blood . . .” His mind darted after an earlier thought.

“There’s the old savage stirring in me, reminding me of blood-stained furrows, and far-off hellish rites—altars blurred with the agony of one perishing for the sins of the many. . . .” Returning: “Their doctrine of equality,” he said, “opened the way to a subtler and worse tyranny than them all. Who rules our equal-born slaves? The plutocrat, who once was a trader, belonging to a lower caste than either ruler or seer. What has become then of the thinker and the statesman? The thinker starves unless he turns to serve the existing disorder—as an opportunist priest or a bat-eyed lying economist. The statesmen—there are no statesmen: they vanished when they ceased to rule except at the bidding of the plutocrat behind the Speaker’s Chair. Curse the scrannel pipes of your preachers of equality—curse the scientists who’ve taken the world to bits and forgotten to put it together again. The world waits a new autocrat, the ruler who thinks, the thinker who rules. . . .”

“Thinkers cannot rule—at least, not until they cease to think.”

“Socrates could have ruled, K’ung could have ruled; Pericles, Marcus Aurelius, Julius Cæsar, did rule. You’re allowing yourself to be misled by the peculiar disease of modern thinkers, the neurasthenia which is both cause and effect of their impotence.

. . . In the same way, the modern artist, like the modern reformer, bewilders himself with so much helpless gazing on the complexity of life that he carries disorder into his works, and represents life as a multitude of irrelevant facts, or delves into a curious psychology of the brothel. The new ruler, like the new artist, will make order by the force of his genius, as man made the old gods, creating them in his own image. . . .”

They came through fields to the foot of a high knoll. Near the top the remnant of a high wall faced great shaken trees. It bore a faery name: but round Arthur's Monument that night were no mailed shades, nor wood folk, nor Merlin palely loitering. The clamour of a great wind filled the narrow circle of its stones, and far-off infrequent thunder shook the heavy air. Denarbon and the girl climbed the rough slope: he helped her over stones and hollows with abstracted care. To his burning discourse of a new aristocracy, master of itself and life, she had made answer that it would indeed be very nice. He was depressed, and recalled in silence many such answers, little noticed at the time. He imagined now that he had remembered them against her. Once he had praised Egyptian Sculpture, glorifying it above the Grecian as simpler and universal. She had thought it merely uncouth, and bewailed the absence of an Egyptian Venus.

They were leaning over the low wall, peering into a troubled blackness. He became conscious that she had

moved very near to him, so near that he felt her throbbing breast against his arm, and the warm pressure of her body in the darkness. He looked down : her eyes, half closed, sought his : through parted lips her breath came swiftly. She made a sudden movement : shaken out of his absorption, he understood at last. And because he was young and dissatisfied, he took her in his arms and kissed her fiercely, pushing back her hat to kiss her hair. He felt her lips upon his throat. At that moment he hated her more than death and failure, and stopping suddenly, loosed his hold and turned away.

She was a while silent, and then, realising the truth, struck at his face with her gloved hand. " Oh," she said, " how dare you. . . . How dare you ! . . . "

Denarbon had heard a haggard prostitute shriek the very words after some drunken wretch who kissed her in the street. He saw her now and the lights reflected on the wet pavement, and the sodden skirts of the poor wretch. His temples throbbed : she struck him again and he caught her wrists, blind with rage. " I hate you," she stammered. " I hate you : I trusted you and you insulted me."

Suddenly he laughed, and on the instant was filled with a queer pity. He entreated her forgiveness, humiliating himself to save her tortured pride. But it was too late : she had seen his face in the moment of his revulsion. She could not believe him, nor deceive herself into thinking that he had not seen her

desire and her instinctive cunning. She left him and ran stumbling down the slope. He followed her to the road, and saw her reach the beginning of the tram lines. Then he turned and walked back across the fields. When she was gone, his pity died : he felt towards her as to that silent head when he battered it into meaningless clay. He was humiliated and sore. A shameful pity came again.

“ I might have lied better,” he thought, “ women should not suffer,” and accused himself bitterly. Then he saw afresh his easy surrender to the oldest of tricks and burned with shame.

The wind had dropped : the sky hung low above the waiting earth, and through the living darkness the thunder crashed and died.

Denarbon reached the top of the hill that faced the town : the group of trees, still and huddled, loomed in front of him through the blackness. Lightning leaped past him like a sword : he shut his eyes, and opened them upon a riven spectre that had been a tree.

The thunder bellowed above his head : shame and anger were a dim memory. The lights of the town called across the valley with their old-time wizardry.

The rain swept down and hid them, as, blinded and exultant, he shouted down the hill.

CHAPTER IV

THURLOW shipped his oars and let the boat drift. The lake was very quiet, a polished shield beneath the high sun. Branches trailed to the dappled water. Athenais bent her head as the boat slipped beneath them and brought up gently against the twisted roots. They scrambled up the shelving bank and walked through the trees to a hollow set round with heavy pines, and lit by the sombre flame of the rhododendrons. Thurlow stretched himself on the ground and Athenais sat beside him. From every side thrust the burnt stems of the bracken.

“ Why don’t you talk, Thea ? ”

She smiled at him but said nothing.

“ You let me do the talking, always.” He pressed his cheek against her arm.

“ You like talking.”

“ You’re happy, aren’t you ? ” he persisted. “ You like this ? ”

“ Quite happy, though I could wish the sea were just over there, and not a lake that will soon be full of boats and people.”

“ You miss the sea ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You never talk to me about it.”

She did not answer him, and he sat upright to look at her.

“ *Why* don't you talk, sweetheart? I want to hear your opinions on things, not to be for ever boring you with mine.”

She hesitated, and a moment later he was talking again, this time—God help him—of the possibility of human freedom.

Athenais listened.

In truth, she was afraid to talk. She lacked the assurance with which her lover discoursed on unfamiliar things. Her mind hesitated on the edge of the undiscovered world. It was empty of that furnishing of accepted truths which arrogant youth privately relies on and publicly scorns. From a friendless and unschooled childhood she came to college with untried faiths and an intellect fed on the books in her father's library. She knew more of European literature than the average student knows at the end of his course. She knew so little of the conduct of life that she was prepared to put any or all of her ideas into practice. The welter of college life bewildered her. She fingered uncertainly the rags of modernity cherished by the youthful intellectual. She listened to the cheerful irreverence of Thurlow and Denarbon, unable to recognise old ideas in their modern clothes, ashamed of her ignorance and afraid to criticise. She was forming standards of criticism, but

she dare not produce them in the light of day. They were tossed about in her mind in a chaos of thoughts and enthusiasms. She was of course a Socialist, but through instinctive hatred of injustice rather than through knowledge or experience. She listened. Thurlow, half aware of her uncertain groping, was neither wise nor old enough to help her. He watched her as she sat considering his words. At times he reflected uneasily that he was adding to the ferment of her thoughts, but he could not help talking. He did not always take himself seriously nor stop to estimate the worth of his theories about life. On the whole he did her very little harm. She was too obstinate to be influenced overmuch, though for a time, half unconsciously, she adapted herself to his ways of thought with a docility that deceived him.

The warmth of the dry earth folded itself round them. Athenais leaned against a tree, listless and quiet-eyed. Thurlow raised himself on one elbow.

"Thea," he said, "have you ever a horror of old age?"

"Sometimes."

His voice quickened. "I want to know all there is in life. I want to live now. Old men, with their little pack of experiences, thumbing them over, all greasy and frayed at the edges—I hate them. I want to live with all there is of me." He stopped, half-ashamed of his passionate vehemence. The girl did not speak. His eyes darkened as he watched her.

"Thea," he said, and when she did not move, "Thea, are you listening?"

She looked down at him. Her face burned. He stood up suddenly, and swung her to her feet. The hand she lifted shook as it touched his hair. He shut his eyes, and they stood so for a moment until the same swift impulse drove them together, shaken and breathless.

She stirred in his arms.

"Don't."

"Don't what, beloved?"

The girl turned her eyes from his glance.

"Don't let's be like that. Dissatisfied. Clutching at each other."

He loosened his hold.

"Are you dissatisfied?"

She tried desperately to make herself understood.

"We go under to it all. You know. We lose—balance. Oh, I can't explain."

Suddenly he dropped his arms and laughed. "Oh, my dear," he said, "my dear. No, don't be angry with me. I love you. I will be so good to you."

Late that night they stood outside the door of her rooms. The house was in darkness and Athenais fumbled for her key. Thurlow put his hand over hers.

"Let me come in and stay with you a little while," he said. "It would be quite safe. The old girl's asleep. She'd never dream of such a thing, anyway. Athenais, let's risk it."

Athenais shook her head.

"Why not, sweetheart? You're not afraid of me?" He bent to peer into her face.

"No." She hesitated. "No. It's not that. I want to think."

"I'll help you think."

"You'd try to think for me," the girl said slowly.
"I'd rather be alone."

He kissed her and let her go.

CHAPTER V

THURLOW and Denarbon, attempting a difficult courtesy to their professor, walked crabwise from a class in Ancient Philosophy. Japhet Brebis strode behind them along the narrow corridor, still lecturing on Parmenides, while with heads half-turned in painful attention, they stumbled towards the crowded hall. In College Road, the lecture went on as he cycled slowly away. They halted on the sidewalk with a desperate firmness : Japhet Brebis sighed, and ceasing to lecture, offered an invitation over his shoulder. It was accepted, and towards dusk, he ambled restlessly about his room eyeing wistfully an uncut "Classical Review." He had a great liking for Thurlow, whose whimsical genius pleased him, in spite of his vague distrust of the young man's erratic habits of study. His liking for Denarbon was touched with an undefined feeling that appeared most often as a faint pity or fainter contempt, and he was wont to jeer mercilessly at the ineffectual Platonist.

When the two friends came, he had fallen beneath temptation, and they sat silent for half an hour in the failing light while he bent over the pages of the "Classical Review." He was astonished to see them

and had to be reminded of his invitation. "Oh, yes, yes," he said at last, "forgive me, gentlemen: I was just reading an article by a fool who imagines the Iliad to have been a Mystery Play of some Guild of Smiths. Terrible to think that such men live. It reminds me of a man I knew who believed to the day of his death that the Indian Empire was a fiction created by Lord Morley to keep the public off Social Reform. Why Lord Morley? I don't know. I never did. The poor fellow died in great pain some years ago, still an unbeliever." He found them the black cigars that Denarbon loathed, and settled his small plump body into an armchair. The fire that he kept all through the year burned fitfully in the darkening room.

"You're not down at the Gas Works," he said. "Have you been?"

"We have not," said Thurlow, "nor shall we be."

One of the frequent small strikes was dragging out its course, over-wrought tramdrivers and gasworkers standing in a futile alliance. A number of students had joined the other blacklegs as stokers. Some of them did it for a jest: the many in hope of grace to come. It is written in the book of their damnation.

"It is as well," said Brebis, "otherwise, I should have tried hard to plough you in Ancient Philosophy. Have many of my men gone?"

"Only one, sir, We met him with his pockets as full of stones as St. Stephen, and told him that a few

strikers had begun to attack the blacklegs. He said that St. Paul himself had fought with wild beasts at Ephesus."

Brebis poked the fire carelessly : a lump of coal fell out upon the rug, singeing it vilely. He picked it up, and held it absently between the tongs as he went on. "There would seem to be more than a little wrong with the spirit of a University when the students are so ready to side with the party of reaction. I met a fool this morning who said that it shewed their recognition of a great responsibility. As I told him, Dionysius moves the world, and youth keeps up his worship : when young men take upon themselves to hunt with the police force, the world is in the worst way."

Thurlow smiled in the darkness. "We are not always so complaisant." He thought of a monstrous fire, lit in College Road, and blazing to Heaven with the seats and palings of the tennis courts and the advertisement boards of twenty firms. Grotesque painted students, and infuriated firemen and police reeled in combat across his vision. Brebis caught his fugitive smile. "Let me tell you," he said, "that I was not thinking of a none-too-far-off bonfire and a ruined hose-pipe. I have not forgotten that both of you spent the night in gaol, and that I had to swear next morning to your good character before a mediæval magistrate who insulted me largely. No. It is the rebel spirit in life and ideas that I want to see these young men cherish. Our gentlemen blacklegs

seem to me so many dead and rotting bodies, though I do not doubt that they believe themselves to live."

Thurlow leaned forward and spoke eagerly. "They are not so many, sir, and the spirit of the college takes small account of them. Because social reformers and bad parsons, the Westons and the Starlings, find themselves on the same side as the money, you can't condemn all of us. What else would you expect of them? But we of the northern universities are nearer life and the rebel spirit than you will allow. At least we are nearer than Oxford or Cambridge. The grime and strife of the world comes up to our very doors: in the technical departments, we have the very machines that man must master if they are not to master him. Why, at this moment, the future struggle is being fought in little down at the gas works, not two miles from our quadrangle. We are taught life up here: not all the old-time music of the Classics, nor mediæval witchery, nor record of dim glorious fights, can fill our ears beyond the hearing of her warning."

Brebis spoke sadly. "You make the usual blunder when you judge the world by your own eloquence. Your college may be set in a filthy industrial city, and not in the dusty quiet of Oxford, but don't deceive yourself into supposing that by virtue of such an accident you are any the nearer life. You may be nearer the recognised type of young intellectual That

is just what you are—intellectuals, full of ideas on life and high resolves. But what good will you be to life? What are you teaching the world to expect from you?—one day burning College Road, the next blacklegging in a petty strike, the next discussing life over your beer, until perhaps you are so drunk that you see two lives, this and another after death. It is well that there are as few intellectuals in the Universities as anywhere. But what are you going to do with your ideas, and your modicum of intellect, and your trained minds? Join the middle class, most of you, and become a dead weight on all the forces of advance, get married and breed children to bear after you the shackles of your desperate morality and scarce won security. I could never make up my mind whether I admired the courage of the middle class, or despised its cowardice the more. And is that all you've been trained for?" He waved his arm at imagined crowds, harassed failures, and well-fed complacent victors. "Shame on such a life? Permit me, gentlemen, to deliver my warning to the intellectual in your persons. This is it. Wealth is growing quicker than population. So that someone is getting richer. It's not the poor man, for he is breeding faster than wages are increasing, and all the time the cost of living grows. So that the rich get richer, the poor poorer. A hell-deep gulf ahead. Where will the cleavage end? It's your business to find out, and long before the end is in sight, your choice must be made. On which side in

the coming struggle will your vaunted intellect be found ? ”

He collapsed unexpectedly. A leaping flame revealed the dying excitement in his small round eyes. He seemed to be peering into the corners of the room for the spirit of Japhet Brebis, escaped.

Thurlow and Denarbon sat without word or movement. When he stirred again, his speech had its old trick of vague irrelevance. He wanted to shew them a Thirteenth Century edition of the “*Ars Rhetorica*,” the margins of every page covered with the comments of an old schoolman. Ten generations of students had seen this priceless book, always shewn them as on the eve of burial in the British Museum. Brebis could not find it in his desk : he flung manuscripts and books on the floor in a futile search. From the pockets of his coat he took the proofs of an edition of Lucretius, many years overdue. Sometimes a letter recalled it to his mind : he would take it out, look at it, and put it absently back. In the same coat he carried the half-finished manuscript of a treatise on the Egyptian Root of Christianity. Like all his books, it was the work of a brilliant, too ingenious heretic. He took it out, shewed it to Thurlow and Denarbon, and carelessly returning it scattered some sheets upon the floor. Thurlow picked them up and suggested that a manuscript might be easily lost out of the gaping pocket. Brebis was interested. “I did lose one of my books like that, you know,” he said, vaguely

eager, stumbling in the darkness over chairs and the books lying on the floor. He paused at last in his aimless rambling. "I don't know where I put that book. I'm sorry. I should have liked to show it to you." He returned, murmuring, to his arm-chair.

There was a long silence. Denarbon shifted restlessly. Brebis turned upon him suddenly. "Do you know," he said, "they talked of giving me a woman assistant. I told them that I was not in my dotage, and desired no Shunammite virgin. I hope that you have read the story of King David, Mr. Denarbon. The Board was confused." He dismissed feminine scholarship.

"I have wondered," said Denarbon, "what nine-tenths of the women students can get out of their college life. Some of them never lift an eye from their books and the time-table of their lectures, during the whole period that they are here. They can never see their work as a whole, and certainly they never see anything else."

Thurlow knew more than either of the others about the woman's side of the University, from the pretty student frankly out for marriage to the garrulous young woman intent on reforming the world from a Labour Exchange. His cynical vision came by way of Athenais. Stepping out of lonely years into his life, she stumbled through the scheming and counter-scheming of the women, at first horrified and then amused. She studied them, much as the young

Achilles in his girl's clothes, may have studied the thoughts and habits of his unwitting companions. Her mind, curiously masculine in most respects, betrayed its sex at the times when she delighted to leave a group of women vaguely aware of her hidden laughter.

Thurlow remembered her bewilderment and her half-unconscious contempt : he heard Brebis' vague speech and wondered what women students made of his iron-bound mathematical philosophy, at strange variance with its wandering expression.

" I don't know why women come to my classes," he was saying. " But they do come, and look at me with so unwinking an intelligence that I know they are not understanding one quarter. They work so hard that it pains me when I must point out that a well-bred parrot could have written their papers in Philosophy. I know only one exception to the rule : a girl with a French name. She joined my modern philosophy class last year. Most of the lectures she cut, a very unusual thing in a woman. When she did attend a lecture, she took notes on odd scraps of paper, with a dirty little pencil. At the end of the year she wrote an extraordinary paper, almost a brilliant paper. Moreover, it was original work. I took particular pains to make sure that she had not been reading back numbers of philosophical journals. I was sorry when I had to mark it down because I saw that she'd avoided all the questions calling for accurate book knowledge. One

other time I had such a paper from a woman, and then it seemed to me familiar. But I couldn't find its matter anywhere : it was a wonderfully good paper, wonderfully good. Suddenly I realised that it was nothing more than a transcript of my own lectures. One has to be so careful with women. . . ."

He talked on, paying no heed to Thurlow's rare comments. When the young men were going he startled them by a sudden outcry. Hurrying into the hall he felt in the pockets of a dusty rain coat, and brought out the lost book.

"No money could buy that book, gentlemen," his plump body vibrated with pride. "To-morrow it is going to the Museum : though it is only six weeks since I acquired it, I have no right to keep it any longer."

He put it in their hands. They touched the heavy pages beneath his jealous eyes, and as they escaped from the house, saw it join the dishevelled manuscript in the pocket of his coat.

"God, what a man !" said Thurlow.

They walked rapidly down the road. Through dark alleys between the houses, they saw the red smoke of the furnaces leap and fall. As they reached the door of Denarbon's rooms, midnight struck in the shadows of the city. Thurlow, pausing in an unfinished sentence, left Denarbon on an abrupt "Good night."

In the silence of her room, Athenais heard the same clock. She was not working : that she did in irregular stretches, alternating a sleepless industry with days of

unbroken indolence. The sound roused her from a long immobility. Turning out the light, she went upstairs. A few moments later, she came down and lit a candle on the overmantel. Then, opening the window softly, she drew back into the shadows. . . .

The stars fled backwards through the years. Old temples gleam among forgotten groves. The Theocritan shepherd pleads with his love. Her loosened zone slips below her knees, and he draws her down among the tamarisks.

During the long night of the Dark Ages, men sleep wrapped in cowl and hood.

Almost before the dawn Dante lifts his love to the paling stars : yet he, and Petrarch after him, praised best the woman they had not enjoyed.

The Renaissance fled across the world on the burning wings of man's desire for the gods that died. A Roman sarcophagus is unearthed in the Appian Way : within lies a girl, her body radiant in all the grace of life. The citizens of Rome, flocking to the Capitol, worship in her the beauty of a dead world. Love unhidden, bears lyrics more beautiful than herself. Lovers risk a state for the white body of a mistress.

The cup is spilt. A Puritan age, looking back to the fiery chastity of Zarathustra, makes passion a thing of leering shadows. Men escape, but not to freedom : the rebels of the Restoration glorify a sad adultery. So that later poets must needs praise a sexless thing of moony wings, an Epipsychidion.

Where now sleeps the warm Love? Alas, poor, blind child, a captive among sociologists and undesired women, who have shorn his wings and named him Sex, grotesque obsession of a graceless age. And men who would have sung with Dante, arms, love, and virtue, three noblest themes, pass him by. . . .”

Athenais and Thurlow, taking each other unconcernedly, achieved maybe the sanity of a new Renaissance. . . . The road ran straight to it from that first forest dawn, though they had not seen it then, and trod it with unconscious feet.

Thurlow crossed the tiny garden at the back of the house, and stood beneath an open window. A single candle flickered in the depths within. Grasping the window sill, he pulled himself up, and dropped softly into the room. Athenais leaned towards him in the shadows, with laughing eyes. He held her in his arms, his eager words sweeping to the height of their desire. . . .

The white light of the early sun filled his eyes, when, stooping, he kissed her loosened hair upon the pillow. She stirred, and half waking, smiled beneath his touch. He stole softly down the stairs, and opening the window of the other room, went by the way he had come.



BOOK II
LONDON

CHAPTER I

THE books in the heavy cases were histories of Industry and systems of economics : along an upper shelf a few Italian poets in soiled vellum hid their alien misery. In front of the bookcase, a pile of flimsy pamphlets, carelessly ransacked, lay scattered over the carpet. Through an open window, the rain drenched the dusky blue and purple of the curtains. Margaret Destin, her eyes on the tremulous lines of a letter, her ear filled with the thin tones of a dead voice, did not see it or hear it. Dusk crept through the room : the firelight, rounding the hard lines of her chin, gave back its beauty to the dimmed hair. She heard her husband's voice outside the door : he came in, and stretched a hand towards the switch.

" Shall I turn on the light, Margaret ? " And then : " I'm sorry to annoy you in this den of thieves and politicians, but I can't find any smooth notepaper. May I take a little of yours ? "

He saw the dripping curtains, and shut the window, amused and protesting. Margaret spoke abruptly. " Heloise Garain is dead : they have sent me a letter written the day before she died."

" Yes," he said, and then vaguely, " I am very sorry."

The name pleased him, and he tried to recall the woman who had borne it. She fled his careless pursuit, and gathering up the notepaper, he went on a friendly warning against September rains. . . .

There was a time when man went about his work within sight and hearing of a spirit world. The ghost of an ancestor dwelt in this black tree : the more potent spirit of a vanished wizard held that thin-singing grove. Later, man drove his wizard-ghosts to the thronged sky and they were gods : fathers and dead lovers, he sent to burn in Hell, or shine in Heaven. Now, while hopes and fears slip past his clearing eyes, he stretches sideways and backward for the living thoughts of the dead men, comforting himself thus in the swift passage of his own shadow across the wall. And one day in the crowd his eyes meet those of his own youth, a shadow among shadows, challenging, accusing, or tender. . . .

The woman in the arm-chair stirred uneasily. This was the room where she sat as chairman during long committee meetings, and discussed a liveried and salaried Reform.

But was it ? . . .

Dim chairs and faded pictures took on form and colour in the austere spaces : the room of fifteen years ago leaped suddenly into light. Sunshine came through the delicate curtains : on the light tables Italian poets and modern verse lay in silent enmity. Grey and rose cushions filled the broad window seat.

A woman knelt on the floor beside the deep couch : her dark hair had slipped in disorder to her shoulders, and she wept uncontrollably.

Margaret Destin was twenty-three when she married Robert Destin, second son of a French landowner. The fortunes of his family, laid during the Revolution, by Charles-Mathias Destin, audacious lawyer, were already failing at the beginning of the present century, and Robert, leaving his elder brother to cope with the confusion, came to London in the train of a married sister. He fell in love with Margaret Fleming in an hour and married her within a month. She had no meagre income, but Robert Destin did not know that when he first praised her slender grace. The knowledge added fire to his wooing. He had a thin irregular face : his mouth, rather small and full, took on an expression of delicate irony when he smiled. This gave him a distinction, little merited, for he never thought unless he was in danger, nor desired to think. He had a whimsical grace of speech and manner, and the ready sweetness that is the power of so many weak natures. Margaret's adoration of him was uncompromising and passionate. She wished to sweep the world for his pleasure, to be for him wife, sister, and mother at once. They had no children : with a house in Buckingham Gate and only five thousand a year, it was unthinkable. She made over to him half her income, and surrounded him with a tenderness through which he was constantly tempted to break. He tried

to found a habit of freedom, and would act in deliberate defiance of her likes and dislikes : at times with an irritability that astonished him, he scoffed at her infrequent desires towards social reform in phrases adapted from Voltaire, and blunted in the adaptation. On each of these occasions she was so hurt that he begged forgiveness, ashamed first at his unkindness, and afterwards at his acquiescence in the position of spoilt child. At last he ceased to struggle, and allowed himself to be mothered and dominated without protest.

For three years Margaret Destin served happily her love and her desire for dominion. Then one day, coming into the small darkened room that was the library, she found her husband kissing the pale face and closed eyes of her cousin. The door, left ajar, slipped over the thick carpet without sound : she heard his words of overmastering desire, before her cry betrayed her. The other two, turning round, stared at her in a silence broken by the cousin's incoherent appeal.

Margaret Destin had in a high degree that faculty of freeing intellect from emotion which belongs to some over-sensitive natures. She had, too, a feeling for the "situation" that would have been a godsend to our intellectual playwrights. At this moment both powers came almost unbidden into action. She entreated the cousin to wait in another room, and when the girl had gone, turned to her husband with a friendly smile.

"Do you love her very much, Robert? Why didn't you tell me, my dear, and save all of us this? . . ."

He made no answer, and she went on: "Could you not have trusted me? I have loved you so well—and want now only to do what will make you happy."

"Margaret." The sense of her intolerable kindness made his voice harsh. She was touched with self-pity, and turned to strike at him under show of hardness. "At least, let us be honest now. I do not know when this thing started. . . . I do not want to know anything except whether she is your mistress. I . . . cannot believe it."

To have uttered the word seemed to her no less hard and evil than to have herself been some shameful light o' love.

He felt, and was angered by the feeling, that her insistent self-control was dragging them both through a scene absurd to the point of melodrama. He raged impotently, and could say nothing of protest or of sorrow.

"I am afraid . . . that you will have to believe it, Margaret."

She made a pitiful movement with her hands, as if to save herself the words. He stammered and caught himself up on stupid phrases of regret. Both for the moment lost their footing. He pressed his forehead against the window: she spoke hurriedly, her hand upon his shoulder. "Oh, my dear, I am sorry, you must have suffered. . . ."

Her vague thought of sacrifice became a mounting desire to be satisfied at all costs : she chose her words instinctively.

" You will give me what I ask ? Promise me. We can stave off scandal, we can save your happiness, and give me back mine—if you will do this for me. . . . Let her, this girl you love, let her stay here as my secretary. I do not want one, so that she need not even make pretence of work. She can have her own rooms . . . it is all so easy. Oh, Robert, you will not refuse me. . . ."

He looked at her in horror : his æsthetic sense was outraged. Then at the height of her passionate argument, he became suddenly conscious that she was offering him ease in the place of restraint and difficulty, security in the place of constant fear. The sane cynicism of the Latin races awoke and jeered at his awkward silence. He protested aloud against her urgency, because in his heart he had ceased to hesitate. Then, he accepted her sacrifice : or, he sacrificed his pride to her incredible charity. It is no matter.

She left him, and went to her own room. There, crouching on the floor, she wept in an anguish of despair, and with clutching out-flung hands, imagined that she kissed his thin adored face.

Downstairs, Robert Destin consoled the new secretary, pleading with her to play the part from which she shrank. Weary, overmastered, she gave in, seeking only a poor self-assurance.

“ It’s not just sex between us, Robert ? ”

He knew the answer well and gave it readily.

“ You know that it is not : I want you body and soul and mind, the quick leap of your mind to mine, the shining spirit in your eyes, as much as your adorable body. . . . ”

For five years, Margaret Destin endured her stripes. She smiled upon the secretary at breakfast and lunch, took her to dinners, theatres, and dances with the same serenity. From Heloise Garain alone, friend of her convent schooldays, she did not hide the truth, seeking comfort in her first intolerable loneliness. The Frenchwoman gave her both courage and love : but, herself single-eyed as the day, in a thoughtless moment spoke to Margaret of her unique freedom. Margaret, understanding slowly, was hurt and shut herself away even from this loved friend.

At last, Destin, a little weary of the mental and spiritual planes of his love, went to Italy with a party of ineffectual artists. From Naples he wrote to his mistress reiterating an intolerable desire. He told her whimsical stories of the Italy that died in the very glory of a Renaissance. “ I have amused myself,” he said, “ with the life of Ferdinand II of Naples. He lived in the sixteenth century, at the time of the invasion of Charles VIII, and died of the troubles of his state and the pleasures of his marriage with his Aunt Joanna, whom he loved too passionately.” Later he talked of Caprae and the languorous grace of its

women and of the mysterious power of beauty over the soul. Then, from Florence he filled a letter with his delight in the flower-like city, writing of its grey olive-slopes, its enchanted air, its beauty of a poet's dream. He said no word of longing for her : but spoke sadly and vaguely of life as a vast shadow-play, wherein faces came close for brief moments, and hand touches hand in fleeting comradeship.

The secretary, being woman, wept bitterly for a night : being wise, she betrothed herself to the son of a popular Bishop, and kept her marriage feast within a week of Destin's return. He made secret and passionate protest in words of rare charm, and danced at her wedding with pleasing melancholy. He had, indeed, been outpaced, and he turned to his wife with re-born desire. She paused a moment in the intricate manipulation of her social reforms, and though not unshaken in her scarce-won serenity, smiled and passed on.

In the years that followed there were many such secretaries, but they did not live at Buckingham Gate. There Margaret Destin kept three of the ordinary kind, who could hardly cope with the increasing difficulty and extent of her work.

Withdrawing dissatisfied from a Suffrage Society, she declared that women could make the franchise unnecessary by reforming the world without its aid. She discovered herself one of the greatest of living organisers : she was by instinct a ganger. Towards

other groups of reformers—Socialist, Fabian, or Labour, she was conscientiously friendly, but she was careful to publish her entire independence of them. She tried to steal their best workers, and treated a Tory as kindly as a Socialist. She was above all things thorough, and she saw that those around her were as relentlessly efficient. Every step she made was over the firm ground of massed information. All over the country men and women searched and enquired for her. She brought into politics the qualities of the traditional hussif. The brain of her society—its Executive Council—was made up solely of women, but Margaret was wise enough to welcome young men as students and organisers. They did not resent their inferiority: as members of the National Committee they had their perquisites.

She gave political dinners, gathered close her earnest young graduates and organised so many schemes to regulate the lives of the poor that she forgot at last the failure of her own life. When Heloise Garain went north with her husband, their friendship became for Margaret a half-sorrowful memory.

Now, at the end, the cold hands touched her heart to intolerable regret. Margaret walked to her desk, and painfully, with awkward fingers, wrote to the dead woman's daughter. "If you will come to me, little Athenais, I will welcome you very gladly."

The rain shook the windows and the fire died down.

CHAPTER II

ATHENAIS grieved bitterly for her mother, not for the dead but for the living woman, whom she had hardly known. Heloise Garain's unvarying kindness to her daughter had been indeed no more than lack of interest: Athenais wept it now as a gift far beyond her worth. The house was intolerably silent: her father, shut up in his room, wrote all day and seemed to shrink from speech. Silence oozed from the walls, dripped from the ceiling, rose from the floor. Towards the end of October, he told her that he was going into Italy for two years, perhaps for more, and asked her what she meant to do. Athenais looked at him a little helplessly. She had forgotten her brief triumph as the head of the English Honours list. Her radiant plans had slipped away while, with weary eyes, she watched the ancient glory of the sea.

"Don't you want me?" she said at last.

"I do not need you," he told her, "and why should I drag your youth in my old slow steps? When you die there will be no longer the light of day for you, nor love, nor effort. Take them, then, and use them well, not as one who tears at a feast that he must leave, but as one who must make roads that men unborn may

walk better and further. I have nothing to give you except the wisdom of experience, and what use is my experience to you? You would not remember it: you would not use it unless I forced it upon you. And I have no desire to make my past the grave-clothes of your future."

Athenais cried out that she could not let him go alone. "And what shall I do when you are gone? What *shall* I do?"

He smiled. "Little daughter of my heart, I love you very much but I will not take you with me. You have your own work to do, and you cannot do it at my heels. You will love: you will marry and bear children, and do what you can as a maker of roads. I have not left you alone, for your mother's good friend is eager to care for you. And I have not left you for always. I shall come back. I know that, just now, you think your life well spent in serving me. But what will you think a year hence? You have a lover. . . ."

Athenais interrupted him quickly. "I want——"

"Do not tell me," he said, "there is no need. You give yourself away many times a day." Athenais reddened like a fool. "If you are happy and wise I had rather that you kept your secret. When you have hurt your hands then you can come to me."

Athenais felt unaccountably resentful.

He would hear no more, and within a week left for Italy, without again breaking his silence, save by

infrequent words. He arranged his affairs so that she would always have an income of an hundred and twenty pounds, and regretting that it was so little, he went his way. Whether he were more wise than foolish, more sane than mad, I do not know or I would have told you. . . .

First among the plans that Athenais had made came her wish to study at the London School of Economics. She refused Margaret Destin's invitation to live at Buckingham Gate. She thought it absurd for a socialist to live in such a quarter: she was very young. She was, moreover, somewhat absurdly careful to avoid a burden of obligation, and having always enjoyed such freedom as may be possible to man, did not consider whether freedom might not be bartered for ease: again, she was very young. Margaret, a little disappointed, found rooms for her in Chelsea, and early in November the girl came to London.

Thurlow met her at King's Cross. They walked down Southampton Row and Kingsway to the Strand, and stood on Waterloo Bridge. The city, swept by a clearing north wind, stood grey and stubborn along her immemorial banks. No changing haze of smoke hid the challenge of her great buildings and defiant spires. The fierce gold of the early sunset broke through slow-moving clouds. Night, drawing down the river, hid the dull barges and drew the river in double fetters of light. City of the world, is there no

man to praise thee fittingly ? Art still too young for worship ? Empires and cultures slipped away while thy poor huts rotted and were painfully remade. Yet are thy dead less great than they of Athens ? Was Florence nobler, whom Dante, calling her "most beauteous daughter of Rome," remembered even in hell and paradise ? Poets wept the widowed Rome : who shall remember thee, mistress among cities ?

Shining-eyed, Athenais looked across the star-sown darkness, hardly listening to Thurlow's eager words. Then, turning back, they walked along the Strand to Charing Cross, and so to Chelsea.

Thurlow had been in London for five months, and was growing more and more dissatisfied with himself and his work. As reporter for the "Morning News" he was a failure, and that after a curious fashion. His words and phrases played him tricks, so that in almost every line he wrote, a malicious second meaning peered through the simple-seeming story. He went to report on a great Feminist Congress, and his decorous words stripped the women on the platform of every rag of decency. In his hands a scientific meeting became a council of grinning skeletons : his humorous account of a banquet read like an anti-masque of beasts. Yet there was no one phrase on which he could lay the blame for these indecent travesties of journalism. The news editor fell back on a dragging sarcasm : "You're too intellectual for this paper," he told Thurlow, "you ought to be writing fancy economics for the

'New Age,' or any other Socialist rag." He gave Thurlow's latest article to the boy in the outer office and told him to hammer it into shape and pray for promotion. To his half-brother's demand for an explanation, Thurlow said that he did not know how his words came to be thus two-edged. He swore reform, and, written painfully, his stories became so dull and heavy that he was sent to join the leader writers across the passage. To each leader, when he had written it, he added a worn quotation and, with funereal effect, an old joke dug from "Punch." His half-brother praised his progress, and while Thurlow's loathing of the work endured his leaders were beyond reproach: for six months there were none worse written or more poor of thought in London.

Disaster came with a stride. On a June evening, he took Athenais with him to Epping Forest. The sky gleamed through the branches a clear cold blue, and as they went deeper into the wood, it hung a great silence above them, and tiny jarring notes went up to meet it. Dusk stole after them through the trees and swept away their words, so that they walked in silence and came at last suddenly to the road.

The land fell gently away in front of them. Dull bluish clouds hung low in the sky: the fine gold of a pale sunset faded into a tenuous fringe above them and was swept away. They turned back into the wood and walked with no light save a star chance-seen through the trees, no sound but the myriad small wood-notes that

seem the breath of silence. They climbed a small abrupt hill and Athenais ran laughing down the long slope of the other side. Brambles pricked her bare feet, and the branches caught at her hair. At the foot of the hill they found a flat stone in a tiny clearing and made a fire in it. The wood was tinder-dry and pale flames leapt above the smoke. A group of poplars behind the light of the fire fled upwards in dense streaming shadows. They sat beside their hearth-stone, and the silence of the forest, an intense, active silence, pressed upon them from all sides, lying heavy across their eyes, dragging at their shoulders. Every little while it was torn by a swift small wind that swept with it thin scents, and shook apart the upper branches, so that they saw the troubled darkness of the sky. The fire died down ; they stamped it out, laying huge stones upon it, and went on.

Later they slept beneath great beeches. The cool fingers of the dawn woke them, and they wandered along the edge of the wood while the forest stirred around them. The sun was high when they stayed for breakfast at a farm near Chingford, and so to town, still half-bewitched. Thurlow went straight to the office of the "Morning News," and was desired to write a sub-leader on University Education in such a way—so ran his orders—as to attract the workers to the question.

The smell of the dead leaves beneath the beech trees lingered : he saw a small lake, still and gleaming

in the white light of the early sun : his thoughts mutinied. . . .

“ In current cant, labour is restless. Labour, a peculiar floating product, predicated of all the lower grades of men, possesses but two qualities—of unrest, and of apathy : the latter is to be encouraged and prayed for, the former soothed and smothered. The leniency of the rulers of this our England, long time chosen home of freedom, is foolish in its forbearance. Our ill-fed and ill-clad rebels are first reformed : should that not satisfy them, they are starved : do they pull in their belts, harden their hearts, shut their ears to crying children, their eyes to haggard wives ? They are shot. The Red Sea swallowed Pharaoh : a modern Jehovah and his priests would order it to swallow the escaping slaves. ‘ Pity the poor Russian, who is shot in the first place. . . . ’ ”

ThurLOW hammered the table in a sudden indignation. The other man in the room, bent over a book of maritime statistics, jumped nervously. ThurLOW, apologising vaguely, followed the dancing star. . . .

“ This fresh talk of education is the beginning of a soothing. The workers are to be excited by the fearful state of Oxford and Cambridge, whose dons are longing to embrace the sons of coalheavers as scholarship students. ‘ Pray, sir, assist us : we wish to educate a few workers to deceive the others into submission. You had not thought we were so gentle.’ . . .

He pushed aside the text of the proposed reform and wrote his leader. Universities were not mentioned in it : education was. He held up to ridicule the spindle-shanked scheme, and called upon the workers to take their children out of the unwieldy classes where sixty are taught a mechanical slavery by desperate teachers, "with a little boxwood ruler preaching down an infant's heart." He added the quotation with a vague idea of pleasing his brother, and sent the leader to be set up.

The eyes of the demon of Chance twinkled. The only man who saw it was a sub-editor who had sent in his resignation : he let it go. The Editor's personal apology was not enough to satisfy the outraged party of Conservative reform, for the "Morning News" was their official journal. Thurlow's half-brother doubted whether accidents of birth outweighed the risks of such a disaster. At the end he made the impenitent young man his photographic editor, and doubled the watch. But Thurlow made no mistakes beyond a rare attempt to slip into the paper the photograph of an obscure scientist, or still more obscure artist. He wrote articles for intellectual actresses to sign, and learned the ways by which greatness is made, waiting for hours while novelists and dancers sat with imaginary interviewers in another room.

For a time, beneath this profitless labour, his own purpose in life grew clearer to his mind. With Athenais he wandered about London, almost always at night. At the

back of Hammersmith, where small tumbled houses and odd breweries face the river, they walked through the narrow streets of a tiny coast town, born in the darkness. They sat in comfortless Soho cafés, and wandered through the harsh glamour of Brixton into the quaint respectability of Herne Hill.

And always they talked, with the grave eagerness of youth, testing, rejecting, remaking every thought and faith that came their way. Beneath all their criticism and all their evanescent philosophies of life ran one constant awareness of uncertainty. They sought a faith of life: they were too young to know better. They set up a standard by which to judge the measures of reform that pour out of our political sewers, asking of each whether it made for slavery or freedom. They wrote in obscure journals and, on rare Sundays, spoke in Brockwell Park, from the platform of a one-eyed Irishman who disliked Humanity. They loved, after their fashion, and worked harder than they had ever done before, spending strength and energy in the wanton manner of youth.

"We've got to learn so much yet," Thurlow said, "to understand the ways and thoughts of these other folk who are trying to change things. You are learning a good deal from Mrs. Destin. We tried the Fabians, or rather their followers, at college. And the I.L.P. There must be hundreds of young men and women who—like us—joined first the Fabians and then left in disgust. . . ."

"Before they'd paid their sub. if they were really like us. . . ."

The vaguer Thurlow's aims, the more rhetorical became their expression.

"We are the new age," he declared roundly, "it is up to our generation to take the lead or perish. Capital and Labour have arrived at a point where one or other must give place. Higher and higher wages are demanded by the worker. How much of his profits will the capitalist concede to pacify him? Obviously such concessions are limited. The demands of the workers may exceed the limit. They ought to exceed it. They should ask for power as well as bread, and see that they get it. There are signs already of an attempt to create a class of well-fed slaves. Give them free houses, free clothes, free anything, only keep them quiet and profits untouched. . . . The state based on slavery perishes. . . . If the young men don't speak, who will? To speak wisely we shall want our own experts: we can't trust those of the dying generation: some have been bought and those who are not dangerous enough to be bought are no use to us. . . ."

For a while they were content. Athenais found her work harder than she expected. Thurlow hesitated in the world of successful men. His brother's friends were all men who had made their lives secure, who talked easily and well, men with clever pens and assured opinions. He listened: at times he talked, not a little pleased to find that these men listened to

him with interest. He talked too well and too readily and therein lay his lasting weakness.

Athenais went often to the house in Buckingham Gate. Margaret Destin liked her : and was eager to make use of the girl's intellect with its unequal brilliance and critical habit. Athenais, no mean scholar in her own domain, had the scholar's instinct for doubt. Her mind was, moreover, far more subtle than Margaret had first thought. She took the girl to speak at branch meetings where rebellion threatened, and was openly surprised by her skilful handling of a doubtful audience.

"You've got the mind of an old diplomat," she told her once, "you suit your audiences well."

"They don't suit me," Athenais said bluntly "They're too bloodlessly intellectual. If they weren't, I wouldn't try to plane them into submissive discipline for you—not even to please you, beloved Margaret."

"They're the only audiences that would suit you," Margaret told her drily, "you're a shade too subtle for anything more robust. . . ."

The girl proved her worth in unnumbered ways. Margaret's work called for the entertainment of continental socialists, economists, and writers of European note, men and women who had rendered services to her Committee, or whose services were much to be desired. Margaret was very skilful in the art of acquiring valuable and voluntary help from such

people, and more and more she looked to the girl's unerring tact to second her.

Later Athenais sat at the informal councils that decided the policy of the National Committee for Social Reform. Ideas of courtesy—absurd in view of its modern interpretation—kept her long silent in the presence of older and experienced women: that, together with her directness of speech and look, deceived Margaret's politicians sadly. Athenais listened. When later she did speak in those momentous councils, it was never at random or for the sake of speaking, but always from so closely reasoned a basis that her every advance demanded fresh attention: when she criticised, her words were ice-cold and ruthless.

Meanwhile, not only Margaret's friends were deceived by her watchful silence and self-possessed speech. They deceived Robert Destin, who was finding the current mistress too exacting, and decided to give her up.

Later, Margaret added Thurlow to her young intellectuals, and early in August sent him with Athenais to a Fabian Summer School held in a country house near Scarborough.

They arrived on the afternoon of the second day. A few women and one bearded young man were in the house: the rest had gone to Silpho Moor. A maid-servant who seemed nervous to the point of terror, took them to their rooms and left them without a word

of hope. Half an hour later Athenais found her way to the lounge : Thurlow was standing with his back to the fireplace : an excited woman waved her arms at him and talked rapidly. Her speech was not very clear and Athenais was puzzled. She imagined that some aboriginal race was under discussion, and listened with interest. Her mistake became suddenly and rudely clear.

“ It is the right to Motherhood that we women want,” she heard. “ Why, for the sake of this sacred experience should we be compelled to admit an inquisitive world to the knowledge of our secret joy ? Why must the church cover us with its tattered vestments, and the state thrust in a ridiculous finger ? Above all, why should we be compelled to live a lifetime with a man whose sole use and interest for us is over when he has made ready the sanctified beauty of motherhood ? ”

Athenais, dumbly amazed, looked at the speaker. Something in the garbled phrases impressed her as spiritually indecent : beneath the malicious smile of the bearded young man, she flushed awkwardly.

“ We demand,” the woman went on, “ the right to a secret motherhood : we refuse to answer impertinent questions as to the paternity of our children. That concerns us alone. Economically and spiritually independent, the future woman will bring up her children by an unknown father, without interference

and without shame. . . . The rites of the ancient mysteries were secret," she finished vaguely.

"I should have thought," said Athenais desperately, "that it was hardly a new idea : there have always been children whose fathers were not known."

The woman turned on her eagerly. "Ah, yes, but with what burden of shame ! I ask a nobler thing, a new freedom and a new beauty. I demand, as an acknowledged right, what has been heretofore a sinful indulgence."

"Then," Thurlow said, "what you really desire is the shelter of a respectability now conferred solely by church or state—new virtue is old sin writ upside down. You feel stirring within you the dim memory of a forgotten matriarchy, when the wretched husband worked as a servant on the estate of the primitive heiress. Sometimes, when he had endowed her with children, she turned him adrift. Kinder than she, you do not ask us to be slaves : but when our work is done, we and our names are to vanish, leaving, indeed, no wrack behind, but a fatherless child."

His grave speech bewildered the woman, and before she found an answer, a blue-gowned figure rose from the shadows beneath the high window. It darted across the room, and drew Thurlow into a corner. The cropped hair and thin boyish face were not unpleasing : the sexless body wore its garment with the air of a distressed nymph. The girl was perhaps twenty-five : from her reed of a throat came a queer deep voice.

"Do you know," she asked Thurlow, "that seventy-five per cent of men suffer from sexual diseases?"

"I am very sorry." He struggled with a threatened fit of laughter.

"You may well be so: but what are men going to do about it? For I tell you plainly that we women are at the end of our patience. No longer will we endure in silence the worst of injuries."

The elder woman interrupted her. "You are right: submission is at an end for us. Men have too long arrogated the passions to themselves. We insist upon the widest freedom, and the fullest right to experience."

"Of the diseased seventy-five?" Thurlow thrust rapidly. The words struck without warning and the androgyne turned on him with incoherent protest.

Beside Athenais on the couch sat a small peaked woman. She had been spoken to as Grace dear, but seeming half asleep, had not answered. Thurlow's words roused her. A flush spread over her pale face: she licked her lips nervously: and leaned forward to touch him on the arm.

"I hope that you are one of us in the crusade?"

He did not understand. Disappointed, she went on: "I mean that effort of our noblest men and women to sweep away the great evil that infests our streets at night, the great crusade to purify Piccadilly, and set free the suffering slaves."

"It seems to me," said Thurlow drily, "that you

will find plenty of slaves in factories and workshops to set free without tinkering at an evil older than Babylon. May I ask how you will set about it? I suppose you will strike first at the poverty which assists it?"

"I would flog every man concerned in the trade, every man who tries to entrap innocence—flog him within an inch of death with my own hands if the common hangman would not do it."

"Innocence is difficult to prove. And how about the women who ensnare boys?"

"They are a negligible quantity."

"Forgive me, madam, if I am stupid, but I do not see that your measures affect Piccadilly." Angry disgust sharpened Thurlow's voice.

"They will ensure that fewer poor creatures join those already there."

"They are more likely to multiply carefully guarded brothels."

"Then I would flog every man who frequented such places—brute beasts that they are."

"You mean that, considering them beasts, you would brutalise them further and for ever, by a degrading and futile punishment."

"They are already below reason: let them be flogged back into at least a measure of decency." Her hands twitched in her lap: her lips seemed perpetually dry.

There was a sudden movement: the bearded young

man, pushing back his chair, walked towards the door. From there he looked across at Gracedear and spoke for the first time in the afternoon.

“ I have a little tale that will interest you. Early in the twelfth century there lived in the Trevisan Marshes an Italian tyrant named Ezzelino. He was feared so much that his unspeakable cruelties left on the Italian imagination a mark barely effaced by the agony of deflowered Florence and the blood of slaughtered Rome. Now Ezzelino was not mad : his very cruelty was used to further his ends. But there is little doubt that he and others that resemble him in any degree, suffer from some disease that might be called a blood madness.

Permit me, madam, to offer you my deep pity : I know no power that can cure you.”

The deliberate voice ceased : the door shut behind the speaker. In the silence that followed, the woman began to sob hysterically.

Late in the evening Thurlow and Athenais walked through the gardens. The wind shook innumerable scents across their path, and scattered the rose leaves in soft ghostly showers. The sea broke faintly on the distant shore.

“ I hope there won't be many such afternoons,” the girl said. “ That flogging woman was—indecent.”

“ There are others like her,” he answered. “ When women make laws they are nearly always violent, intolerably meddlesome, or retrogressive. I do not

know why, unless it is that they fly easily to violence because they dread that otherwise their authority might not be respected : meddle, because they suffer—a few of them—from an itch for power over anything that can ill resist ; look backwards because the future must be created, and the feminine mind is rarely creative in the best sense.”

He was silent, thinking.

Athenias spoke slowly. “ I wonder that they have learned nothing from the things that have gone on almost beneath their eyes—Balkan war, women ravished and killed or mutilated, children cut to pieces. . . .”

She raised her voice suddenly. “ How can they be such fools ? Things like that can happen to-day and yet such women deliberately foster violence. As if they didn’t know that violence can’t be encouraged for one purpose without strengthening it for others. Persuade men to flog men and they will return to the hanging of children and the ducking of women.”

Her excitement died, and she leaned a little wearily against a poplar that touched the stooping sky.

“ Do not think of them, heart of mine, we will offer them to the stars, and Orion shall devour them for their sins. . . .”

During the rest of the week they heard five lectures. From five points of view the working classes were spoken of as disease-stricken wretches. Their various ills and sores were to be treated by as many wise reforms, and the treatment was covered by one label

—the eradication of poverty. “Do away with poverty and there will be no poor,” one lecturer said: his intellectual audience, recognising it for an epigram, laughed cheerlessly.

Athenais yielded slowly to a feeling that their words, almost unknown to them, were Janus-faced: the mask slipped sometimes awry. At heart, they did not believe that poverty could be swept away: almost they did not desire its disappearance. All that they hoped for was the giving back in free education, free food, free dopes of any kind, what was taken away in low wages. She caught an absurd vision of the Fabian Society swaying softly while it lulled a nation of workers to sleep with cradle-songs.

She learned, too, that Gracedear and her friends were not popular.

“They are not *representative*,” one girl told her.

“No?” said Athenais vaguely.

“I mean that they don’t represent *us*, but they have money, and it is not wise to alienate people who really think——”

“And have money.”

The girl smiled doubtfully at Athenais, and drifted away.

The lectures were not all: young women bathed, went long walks, and climbed cliffs that they might be desirable. They trafficked delicately with conventions to the same end. On a hot afternoon, Thurlow and Athenias found three young men stretched on the

ground in a small plantation at the back of the house, their heads in the laps of three young women who stroked their hair. Two other women walked about Raincliffe Woods until midnight with a few bored and unwilling men, and talked about it throughout the next day. Athenais, seeking Thurlow, found him nervously discussing eugenics with a plump fair woman, whose hand wandered absently about the collar of his coat. She fled : he found her, still laughing, in a corner of the tennis lawn, and protested wildly that he could stay no longer. " We have wasted too much of our holiday : I'll get someone to send us both wires."

They went, and for three weeks lived in a village that clung painfully on the desolate upland of the North Yorkshire Moors. The scanty folk, fighting the moorland for every inch of their intake, spoke a language that Thurlow understood not at all, Athenais but a little. The peewits called across the lonely spaces. They wandered, day after day, in the treacherous silence of the moors ; on the dark edges of a marsh they found the rare, greedy flowers of the sundew, and bog land, starred with the yellow asphodel. The sun went down behind the flaming hills, and night strode across an empty world. If the old gods of the North live still, it is in some such brooding land.

CHAPTER III

JOHN BRINTON, having made money in the present, turned his eyes regretfully to the past. His library of Renaissance literature was famous in two continents: through Europe and America he sought the artists of that perfect dawn. He went yearly to see the few works that the critics have left to Giorgione, never weary of looking at their unearthly clearness, as of music imprisoned in crystal. He could buy none of them, and consoled himself with the thought that death took them from all men. He read the life of the artist, so early dead, and preferred that legend which writes him stricken with the plague by the kisses of the lady concerning whom Vasari says that "they rejoiced greatly, the one and the other in their loves."

After the work of Giorgione he loved the philosophy of an elder artist, carrying still the copy of Lucretius that had been his before wealth. The greater part of his life he spent in Florence: he walked with Lorenzo de Medici and Polizziano past the flawless tower of Giotto, while numberless small villages in Northampton sent their men and boys to his fifty odd boot factories. He believed sincerely that the atoms of which they were composed had been arranged after

such fashion as to fit them only for long dull labour, and he treated them kindly, as might a tolerant schoolmaster some stupid child.

He came back unwillingly to London one early spring, regretting the flowers of Valdarno. There was trouble in his factories, and it could not be settled in a day. At the end of a month, however, it appeared to be vanishing, and he smiled triumphantly at the heavy lines of fog that drifted over the city. "Another fortnight," he told them, "and you will hardly darken a passing thought. Meanwhile, there is Carey's wife, who wants money—a Home for Inebriate Clergy, if I remember rightly."

He took his hat and stick and went to call on her.

Elsa Carey's house in Porchester Gardens made a centre for a curious society of artists, reforming women, and young intellectuals of any sort. She herself wrote emotional verse in irregularly rhythmical lines, free from any taint of poetic form. She called it *vers libre*, and had it printed in one or other of the reviews that sprang and died among her sanguine friends. She also reviewed books for a respectable monthly: she was paid for this work: it bought her gloves and gave colour to her talk of economic independence.

Her husband was a novelist and successful enough to afford the vagaries of her artistic temperament. Before his marriage, he was an obscure writer of delicate and fantastic studies which brought him nothing but the appreciation of a few wise men, John

Brinton among them. He met Elsa during one of his rare visits to an artist who painted the world in primary colours from a garret in Hampstead. She talked then, as indeed still, of a perfect comradeship of man and woman. He married her, hardly aware of the step, and found her both exacting and indolent. Comradeship between man and woman meant to her that the woman must be left free to indulge artistic whims while the man made sufficient money to ensure the leisure and ease demanded of her spirit. Her pretensions to poetry at first amused and then jarred on him. He tried to point out blunders of taste, but she laughed at his suggestions. The admiration of the floating artists who eat once a day—at other men's houses—and form societies to produce their own bad plays, counted far more with her than did the criticism of a cultured and imaginative man. Her extravagance and petulant self-indulgence drew them into debt : he remonstrated with her, at first kindly, and then bitterly and harshly. She wept, and told her friends that no woman might hope for spiritual freedom so long as she was linked to a coarse and unsympathetic nature.

They had one child : Elsa neglected her one week, to caress her frantically the next. It was Carey who bathed her at night, buttoned her petticoats in the morning and saw that she was neither starved nor overfed. He put aside his studies, promising himself to return to them later, and meanwhile wrote novels to sell.

Unexpected fortune overtook him : he became the

fashion. They moved from Hampstead to Maida Vale, and thence to Porchester Gardens. Elsa's craving for luxury grew stronger ; she insisted, moreover, on lending money to artists who could never repay it, and lost many hundreds of pounds in poetical reviews never read beyond her circle. She joined the group of women round Margaret Destin, and she, who had never been able to govern her house or herself, talked for hours concerning the government of the poor. The time for Carey to return to his studies never came : during his few attempts it seemed to him that his hand had lost its craft. His brain reverted constantly to the situations and sham psychology of his popular novels.

And now Elsa professed to look down upon him and made fun of what she called his commercial muse. He smiled at the cheap phrase, and endured everything for the sake of the little girl. Her name was Marthe : she had darkly puzzled brown eyes : her round face with its sullen frightened air became radiant with happiness when she saw him. He took her to Kew and to Richmond Park. They lay on the grass watching the birds and the lonely clouds, and the man felt the same half-guilty, half-irresponsible joy as the eight-year old child. These secret pleasures only had place when Elsa was away, as did the visits of Carey's old friends. For Elsa was jealous not only of Marthe, but of all those of her husband's friends who could not be enticed into pitying and admiring her. She had lately met John

Brinton, on this his first visit to England since Carey's marriage, and did not yet despair of him.

He waited for her now in the long narrow room that she called her salon. She came, dressed in a fragile shapeless garment through which the lines of her body faintly shone. Her greeting was delicately sad.

"You haven't come to say good-bye, Mr. Brinton?"

"Not just yet," he told her, "in another week perhaps."

She allowed her mouth to tremble with woeful sweetness. "Then you have come to see my husband?"

"You should reprove your maid," he said drily, "I asked her to take my name to *you*."

"Oh." The flush might have been of pleasure or annoyance.

"When I met you at one of Mrs. Destin's drawing-room meetings, you asked me for a subscription—inebriate parsons, I think?"

"Fallen girls," she corrected him gently. Apologising, he gave her the cheque he had written, refused tea, and tried to make a brief departure.

"Ah, do not go," she said, looking up at him from her low chair, "I am lonely to-day. Gilbert has taken Marthe to a pantomime: I did not think that they wanted me and so I have not gone."

Her mouth drooped again. The short January afternoon was fading: the firelight shone across her shapely limbs. John Brinton appreciated entirely the

beauty of body that housed the atoms of her soul : of that soul itself he doubted, and thought that it was indeed with her not so much a medium of delicate sensation, as a tricky mummer counterfeiting a joy and sorrow it could not feel. There was a silence : he saw the tears fall slowly down her cheeks.

“ I do not think you are well,” he said. “ Shall I go ? ”

“ No, no—you must forgive me. . . . This has been one of the few days when I have had time to think, and as always when I think, I am sad. My soul is lonely. . . . ”

She paused : he wished himself back in Florence, where a woman’s methods of attraction, if cruder, were less trying, and came sooner to their destined end.

She went on slowly. “ You are Gilbert’s friend, Mr. Brinton. Tell me—do you think he loves me ? ”

He withdrew his reflection : this was certainly very crude. “ I am sure that he does, Mrs. Carey. And if you desire any proof of it, you have only to remember that he has given up the work of an artist—I do not mean such a creature as your ill-shaven, erotic triflers—for the work of a slave, and that for your sake and the sake of little Marthe. Can you want a greater sacrifice ? ”

She realised her failure, and when he took his leave, hid her anger behind unsmiling eyes. “ Come to-morrow,” she said, “ my salon will not be empty

then," and as the door shut behind him, twisted her fingers in helpless anger. "Insolent, insolent," she stammered. . . .

John Brinton walked away down Bayswater Road. At the Marble Arch he found the traffic stopped for a procession of strikers. They were builders : the strike had lasted a month, and a stubborn apathy dogged their steps. Among their banners one carried the words " Give us Bread."

After the lessons of weary years, the poor wretches still believe that government exists for the benefit of the governed, that poverty has equal claims with wealth, weakness with strength !

Brinton stood at the corner of Edgware Road to see them pass. A man leaning from the top of a bus caught sight of him and stumbled eagerly down the steps. He was the bearded young man of the Fabian Summer School, and he greeted the older man warmly.

" Why, Norden," Brinton said, " I thought you were in Russia."

" So I was : but I left in a hurry a fortnight ago. If I'd known you were in town, I'd have come straight to you. Where are you going ? "

" Home. I've just been to see Carey's wife."

Norden smiled, and the two men followed the last strikers into the park. Standing on the edge of the crowd, they caught fragments of the speeches.

" How does this impress you—an employer ? "

Norden asked.

Brinton hesitated. "Chiefly as an inconvenience," he said at last. "And one that has been present under one form or another in every age—and will always be present. There is no possible perfect state : if there were, life, which is ceaseless change, would be no more on its achievement. And there are always some to feel the pressure of the imperfections. I make use of such men as are ready to my hands : when I die, some other will use them. I may be ruined to-morrow and therefore I am not a harsh master while I have still the power to be a gentle one. Priests talk to me of an after life wherein all are free and equal. But for my part, I do not know how men who show themselves only fit for slaves in this short life will handle an eternal one. Nor do I, who have seen Florence, wish to live an eternity away from her. . . ."

They watched in silence the speaker's gestures, curiously incomplete. Norden waved a hand towards him.

"Look at that man," he said. "Slaves, as well as being the most dangerous class in any community, are the most difficult to handle. And he can do nothing but shout at them and encourage them to endure until they can endure no more. Yet there is power behind that crowd of starved wretches, and behind the millions of their fellows, only waiting the direction of a leader who has the intellect and will to use it. Just at present it is lying waste between the multitude of self-seeking fools and the blindness—or

worse—of the lovers of Humanity. I notice that it is very easy to love an abstract noun, but not so easy to love men as they are—mostly stupid, distrustful, and craven.”

In the gathering dusk, the orator looked like a wretch just hung from a branch of the trees near him, and waving agonised arms at the waiting crowd. The two friends left him so, and walked slowly across the Park to Norden's single room in Chelsea. He read, and could write five tongues, and lived hardily on the wages of an erratic pen. He might, indeed, have found a place on the staff of more than one review : his infrequent series of articles on foreign literature were readily taken, but no sooner had he gathered a little money than he disappeared, and was not seen in London while it lasted.

One man had caught sight of him in a crowd of German Socialists whom the police were riding down : another had seen him acting in the open-air theatre at Warsaw : a third found him in a Russian café, drinking vodka with a gaunt dancer whose dilated eyes and sunken cheeks made swift Death seem slow i' the stride.

He preached a queer distorted doctrine of power, reviling workers in several countries for that they asked for bread, where they should have demanded responsibility and freedom. He despised pity as an infirmity of poor minds, and was himself the most pitiful of men, touching all things weak with the

gentleness arrogated to women. His flight from Russia followed on the escape to America of two suspects, brother and sister. His ingenuity and his money saved them, but he did not leave Moscow until his arrest was a matter of minutes. He described his flight and talked his way across Europe until, at midnight, Brinton left.

Hesitating outside Norden's door, he decided at last to walk along the empty shining streets to his rooms in Gerrard Street. At the corner of the road, his arm was gently touched. Stopping, he looked down: the girl had followed him across Piccadilly Circus and through the shadows of Wardour Street. She was unnaturally fair: beneath her heavy fur-trimmed coat he saw that she was also very slight. The laces of her gown left her neck and breast bare: she shivered as she stood looking at him.

"Well," he said gently.

"Will you lend me a little money? I must walk home if you will not, I have a long way to go."

"How does it come about that you have no money?"

"No luck," she told him, raising her absurd eyebrows at the unnecessary question. She had not, he learned, even her Tube fare, and could not pay her landlady, who was threatening to turn her out.

"Are you hungry?" he asked suddenly. She was. He looked round him. Maxim's and the Boulogne were shut. They walked up the road and in Dean Street found a small Italian eating house still open.

She ate all that he ordered, talking cheerfully meanwhile of her misfortune. She had a lover, she told him, by which he understood that the favours bought of all others were free to this one man. "He's not rich, you know, I give him a good time as often as I can afford it."

Pride spoke through her voice : the vaunted lover had just gone, after staying with her a week : she was penniless and had not looked for the night's ill-luck. Her hunger satisfied, she thanked him with a friendly smile.

"You would not care ? . . ." she said. He refused gravely.

"Just as between friends, you know," the girl persisted. "Nothing to pay."

"Thank you—no." He smiled at her.

She accepted his decision and they walked away together. At the corner of Gerrard Street he offered her money for a taxi, and to pay her landlady. She took it, and after a last questioning glance, left him on a cheerful "Good night."

He went next day to the house in Porchester Gardens. The small salon was crowded and intolerably hot. A sallow young man was reciting a poem : though it seemed to be a dialogue between a nymph and a goat, Brinton could make little sense of the few lines that he heard.

"Give me your jewels of heaven——"

"No."

“Then I will howl for years between the night and the day——”

“No.”

He pushed stealthily between the people : at the back of the room he found Carey, standing miserably beside Norden. A tall muscular man with a narrow attractive face greeted Carey at the same moment from the other side. Carey introduced him. “Mr. Thurlow—journalist of sorts.” The recitation was ended : a murmur of admiration came and died : several of the company took their leave : the rest scattered into groups. Fragments of their talk reached the men at the back of the room. “The freedom of women.” . . . “Purification by pain.”

The latter phrase roused Thurlow to indignant comment. “I verily believe,” he said, “that the misery of the world began in that phrase, and will continue so long as it holds its supremacy in thought.”

Norden, immediately interested, asked a question.

“The worship of suffering began with the first savage who offered blood to appease the outraged spirit of a dead wizard. It is akin to the primitive belief in the virtue of blood, that prompts a cannibal to eat the flesh of his enemies, and to the more widespread custom of sprinkling the ploughed field with the blood of a human victim. How many million obscure Christs bled for the sins of the people before Jesus of Nazareth ? They were dumb, while he being dead yet speaketh : but the idea behind the sacrifice

is one and the same. It is the blood-worship of the savage. See what happened when the old pagan gods died. From the enslaved Jews of Syria this worship spread among slaves in every Mediterranean country, waking the echo of forgotten blood-stained shrines. It is the mutilated Christ that they adore : the joy of the world and the antique beauty of art are scrawled over by the sad history of the atonement : the wizard of the skies is appeased again. Now see what part of the great Idealist's teaching has survived ? What but this same worship of pain ? The oppressed slave consoles himself with the thought of stoned and crucified prophets. The poor in spirit are exhorted to remain poor in spirit, by divine command. Pain, endured in silence is made to seem in some fashion a draft upon the bank of Heaven——”

“ Then is patient endurance no virtue to you ? ” Brinton interrupted him.

“ Indeed yes—when all methods of impatience have been tried. How could I, or any man, do other than admire silence in the face of irredeemable suffering ? But my protest is made against the belief that pain and suffering are in themselves beautiful and to be sought after. Do you see anything beautiful in the injustice of starving thousands ? Here is a little child : she has accidentally upset her milk over a silk gown. She is sent to bed and in the middle of the night her mother moans horribly outside her door to terrify her into greater care. The child suffers from

the shock throughout her life. Who is purified by her suffering? A mill-owner houses his workers in rotten tenements: the roof falls in, kills a dozen and maims the rest: would you call them gold tried in the fire, or would you keep that honour for their landlord? A ship goes down at sea: over a thousand people are drowned, partly because there are too few boats on board. The priests call it an act of God, to warn and purify the nations. The shipowners remain largely unpurified, we suppose—for ships continue to carry too few boats—and to go down——”

“Then you don’t think that suffering may leave a nature finer?”

“The endurance of suffering may, and often does. On the other hand it as often hardens and coarsens. But human injustice and pain seem to me hideous things, and the man who justifies them on the ground that they may purify the spirit is either a saint or a degenerate. I do not know which of the two has wrought the more mischief in the world. And so long as pain is considered beautiful, so long will unnecessary pain flourish and increase.”

Thurlow’s voice, unconsciously raised, had imposed silence on the room. When he stopped speaking a thin voice took up the argument.

“You may be right or wrong, but you have not touched the ultimate nature of suffering. . . . Suppose the universe were one whirl of pain: the changing atoms suffering through their change, the sun flaming

in agony, the plucked flower sending through the mutilated air a shiver of anguish to the farthest star. All knowing is pain—from the child who weeps over his letters, to the vivisector whose agents are agony and tortured matter.”

“What a devilish theory.” Norden’s harsh protest startled the speaker. Before he could find answer Elsa Carey leaned forward.

“Do you know,” she said, “I have been reading a book on St. John of the Cross lately that rather suggests your idea. I forget who wrote it—a German, or perhaps a Frenchman. . . .” She went on vaguely confusing facts with theories and repeating parrot-wise the sounding phrases of the book. Her desire to assume intellectual greatness made her effort the more painful to the few listeners who read her incapacity in every word of the garbled repetition. Carey drew back into his corner. Thurlow, who had been present at many such little scenes, was supremely unhappy.

Elsa Carey professed herself a follower of Madame Recamier. The French woman allowed her guests to talk and had her reward: in the modern woman’s salon there was never a discussion that Elsa did not bring to an unnatural end by her persistent efforts to draw it round herself. An over-developed child, she burned to display her reading, unilluminated as it was by any imaginative vision, an ape-like parade of little learning. John Brinton clutched at his scattered

wits : he drew Elsa gently away from mysticism, and the groups were already absorbed in their babbling of art and poetry when Athenais and Margaret Destin entering, covered the lingering awkwardness.

Athenais crossed over to Carey and asked after little Marthe : Margaret was instantly surrounded by a group of reverent young women and a few men with keen clever faces.

A young man talked of freedom. "The Future Woman," he announced, "must be freed of all the work of the house, all restraints of custom. She must be free to work and free to love. She must be freed of the burden of motherhood. Man and woman, risen above passion to the knowledge of a spiritual beauty, shall walk side by side to greet the risen sun."

"How true."

"How beautiful."

"The soul of woman is a fragile shell, filled with a murmuring of eternity."

"Side by side, comrades of the spirit, working together for Humanity."

"I suppose," Athenais interrupted coldly, "you will arrange for a lower order of beings to exist alongside your fragile murmurers. Otherwise, the race will perish in an orgy of pure-mindedness."

There was a babble of protest, and through a sudden opening in the excited crowd, Norden caught a momentary sight of a fair-haired youth kissing Elsa Carey's hand and arm under cover of a dusty palm.

A few moments later Thurlow and Norden took their leave. They left the bus at Oxford Circus and walked down Regent Street. Huge-fronted women, breasting the throng, pushed their way past the big shops.

"It's a queer thing," Norden said, "but when you've once lived in London, you never forget her for long. I've been in places of the most bewildering beauty. Skies of blazing sapphire—peaks that swept your breath away—loveliness that made you afraid. I've stood there, and gone suddenly sick with longing to be in London, smelling the dust and petrol in Oxford Street, walking up a shady street to the Museum. . . ." He laughed. "Come and have some tea."

They went into the nearest café.

"That woman," Thurlow said, "is a half-cultured fool. Why the devil can't she keep her mouth shut when she's out of her depth instead of spluttering round like that?"

Norden stirred his tea. "Women are not strong in the reason," he said absently.

"I am reminded that I meant to look in upon a meeting of another kind to-night. When I was in England last a group of working men and middle class men who merely worked, grew weary of watching Labour leaders making fools and knaves of themselves in Parliament. After trying vainly to entice them to come out and play fool and knave somewhere else,

they decided to be rebels. They called themselves Pioneers, and rebelled with some vigour against every form of cant that came their way: particularly they renounced the bread-alone idea and demanded freedom. I left London before they had time to do more than beat up the crowd, and I want to see what they have done since. Will you come?"

They went Underground to Hammersmith, and there in the basement of a hall found the rebel crew. The room was full of smoke. On a rough platform a man shouted rebellion down the years, and jerked the squeaking ghosts of William Morris and Karl Marx: his listeners stamped and refilled foul pipes. "God help us," said Norden, "they were saying these things when I heard them last three years ago."

After the voice came a silver-mouthed orator who praised the excellence of a book that, carefully studied, made straight the way to becoming foreman or manager. The faces of the rebels took on a puzzled uneasy look. "Curse him," the man beside Thurlow muttered, "are we out to give every man a chance, or to fight for ourselves in the old bloody way?"

"Same fools, same knaves, under a different name," said Norden. "It would seem that all the other disciples stayed under while every Judas and Son of Thunder came to the surface in the working man's struggles."

Thurlow did not hear him. He had caught sight of a head and shoulders that he knew. While he peered

through the smoke, the man turned round. Beneath the colourless mass of untidy hair, Denarbon's thin face looked thinner and more dissatisfied. The meeting was breaking up, and dragging Norden after him, Thurlow strode over chairs and benches to the other side of the room.

"Henry, you old fool, where have you been? I've searched London for you." He shook Denarbon's hand eagerly. "As soon as I came down, I went to the addresss you gave me. The landlady said that you'd only stayed there a month, and had gone leaving a heap of books behind."

"Couldn't afford to move them," said the other. Beneath his undoubted pleasure in the meeting, Thurlow caught a note of something very like dread. The three men walked out into the fantastic brilliance of a London dusk: Norden left the two friends and went back to Chelsea. They walked slowly towards Uxbridge Road.

"Why didn't you let me know where you were?" Thurlow began. "You knew where to find me. . . ."

Denarbon interrupted hastily. "If you really want to know, I'm living in Tenison Street, which is a hellish road on the other side of the river—near Waterloo Bridge."

"Don't know it," Thurlow said, "but we are nearer my rooms than Waterloo Bridge, so come there."

They sat talking far into the night. Thurlow

learned that his friend's little money was almost gone. He lived in one room in a foul tenement : the room above him held two quarrelsome foreigners : in a room across the passage was a woman with three young children : he was kept awake at night by the noisy coming and going of the men who visited her. He slept in Tenison Road and shared a studio in Hampstead with another man. He made a little money by selling rare sketches to odd magazines : these sales were slowly becoming less rare, and his few friends were quite unaware of the depth of his poverty.

Thurlow, bitterly ashamed of his secure life, wondered how he could persuade his friend to share his rooms. He asked Denarbon whether he would take work on the "Morning News," if it could be got for him. But Denarbon was not unhopeful of the future, and refused the tentative offer. Later, with a touch of shame, he spoke of a girl, the sister of an artist friend, She knew that his future was a matter largely of chance, and had insisted that it mattered not at all. They drifted into a secret engagement : he seemed to find as much discomfort as pleasure in his love for her.

"There was another man now in South Africa," he told Thurlow, "a mining engineer—making money. She had made no promise to him, but he wrote to her every week, until she told him of our hopes."

"Then she must be truly in love with you."

Denarbon looked at the other man : the tone of his answer was curious.

"She left him for me : how do I know she'll not leave me for him again—or another ? . . ."

He left soon after : Thurlow, standing at the doorstep, watched his slight stooping figure walk away into the darkness, and felt an anxiety that would not be dismissed.

CHAPTER IV

ELSA CAREY moved restlessly about her tiny sitting-room : the table was covered with papers, scrawled over with fragments of a fugitive poem. She wore the same shapeless gown in which she had received John Brinton : it was less carefully disarrayed, and her bare feet slipped in and out of thin blue slippers. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes radiant, as if she had not long been out of bed : as indeed she had not, although it was some way after noon.

“ Mr. Knowles would like to see you, madam.”

She hurried away to dress, but at the door stopped with a little grimace and turned back.

“ Send him to me,” she said, and when the maid had gone, crossed to the oval mirror, and arranged the top of her gown so that the hollow between her breasts was readily seen.

A young man with thick fair hair came into the room. She held out both hands in eager welcome. “ I was wishing that you might come : my muse has forsaken me.”

“ Then,” he said, “ you shall be yourself a Muse, and I will sit beside your footstool—a devotee.”

He dragged a large hassock across the room, and seated himself on it at her feet.

She smiled a little nervously. "I have wondered all night why you left my salon so early yesterday afternoon. I wanted to talk to you when the others had gone. And—Boy—you must not kiss my hand again as you did yesterday. People are so stupid."

"But you do not care what people think," he looked up at her quickly.

She frowned. "No, no—it is not that——"

He went on. "Mrs. Carey . . . I wish you had never begun to call me 'Boy': it sounds a little like contempt."

"But you are a boy and I believe you have been in mischief and are hiding it from me. Come now—little friend should not deceive his guardian angel."

He moved impatiently, and conscious of having jarred upon him, she tried adroitly to retrieve herself. "If I am talking nonsense, forgive me: it is sometimes the best, though not the easiest, thing to do."

He did not answer, but bent double on the hassock, stared at the fire. She stretched a hand towards him, hesitated, and then put an arm lightly over his shoulder. He did not move: his silence might have been embarrassment or apathy. A coal fell apart in the fire, and the fragments of it burned slowly down to a level mass of cinder. Still he did not move: the woman looked back over many such silences and masked her impatience.

Elsa Carey had drawn a shifting train of comrades from the young men—artists, reformers, lunatics and

poets, who gathered round Margaret Destin and herself. Her friendship with each of them had held a curious quality of uncertainty, born of her ceaseless and half-instinctive wish to absorb them. With no definite resolve or desire, she yet turned everything—her vaunted intellect, her imperfect beauty—to the one end of creating desire and admiration in the men drawn to her by however fleeting an interest. With brains little out of the common, she had a mental itch for dominion that drove her, on the one hand, to the writing of her puerile poems, and on the other to the blind need for asserting her sexual attraction. An inborn cunning had hitherto kept her on this side of safety and the physical chastity which was her conception of honour. This caution made many of her triumphs too brief to be satisfying. There were times when she failed even to attract. Such misfortunes pricked the itching little intellect, and she wrote articles, in a feminist paper, on the "Average Sensual Man." Her failures, and an uneasy want of self-assurance made her fear for success until she were kissed, entreated in private and publicly adored.

Moreover, the simpler methods of attraction were denied her by reason of her assumption of comradeship and intellect.

As it had been with others, so it was with Kenneth Knowles. At one moment she was sure that he loved : at another, an irritating uncertainty drove her near self-contempt. But for the most part, she played

the game without desire, half tyrant and half victim.

Kenneth Knowles puzzled her : his changes of mood were so sudden that her uncertainty became a mental torture. He would sit at her feet, make whimsical confession of weakness and submit to be mothered and petted. Without warning, his submission vanished : he became impatient or stupidly silent, and she called up all her wits to ward off his unspoken criticism. Because he criticised her, she hated him : because he evaded her, she hated herself.

At this moment, more uncertain of him than ever, she hesitated to touch him, but decided that whether he were friend or lover she might stretch that careless arm still further over his shoulder, and finger the edges of his coat.

He twisted round on the hassock that he could see her face. "How long is it since I began to come here nearly every day?"

"I do not know," she said, "since daybreak I think." She bit her lip, and wondered whether that had been more laboured than happy.

He turned away again. "Did the day break, I wonder?" he said softly. "Listen, I will tell you a story : there was once a little boy who lived in a town of great gabled houses where the sun shone always. Then the rain came and the clouds swept up the light, and he was afraid and did not know whether the sun would ever shine again. Will it? . . . Will it? . . ."

His voice rose harsh and not a little weary. Elsa felt his heart beating against her bare arm.

A vague excitement seized her—the same excitement that she felt in the heat of a sharp argument. She tightened her arm suddenly and drew him back against her knees. He dragged himself free and stood up.

“Elsa, Elsa—I want you. . . .”

She shivered and closed her eyes, partly because she was nervous, and partly because she did not know what else to do. He bent down suddenly and lifted her to her feet. She cried out beneath the pressure of his arms. “What shall we do?” he whispered. “What shall we do? . . .”

She stood outside the anguish of his passion, feeling nothing but an angry disappointment that no wild emotion had swept her into ecstasy

“I don’t know,” she said wearily. He felt her limp in his arms and loosened his hold.

“Elsa—isn’t it true that you love me?”

It was not indeed true, but even Elsa hardly knew where artifice left off and inclination began. With a sudden movement she pulled his head down upon her breast.

“What a hot cheek,” she stroked his hair.

“Elsa, don’t do that. I love you: don’t you understand?”

“As a son loves his mother.” Her voice was so quiet and assured that he felt an irrational shame.

He lost his head and babbled stupidly : then in a brief moment of insight, broke off abruptly, and turned to leave her. Elsa was startled. " Ah, don't go." She held out her hands. He was young, but he was not too much of a fool, and he took her in his arms, kissing her throat and hair. Then he put her gravely from him.

" Now let us decide what to do," he said.

" What do you mean ? " The woman was vaguely alarmed.

" Your husband must be told. Shall I tell him or would you rather tell him yourself ? Oh, Elsa darling, how I wish I could spare you all the pain and trouble. I will care for you so—make it all up to you—sweetheart, little sweetheart. I will make you famous in my pictures—build a whole new world for you. How I love you——" He hurried on, mixing incoherent phrases of tenderness with plans absurdly practical, never heeding her dismay. She stared at him in angry reproach.

" But, dear, you mustn't tell Gilbert : I don't understand you——"

The thought of scandal, loss of friends and luxury, horrified her. Her thoughts rushed hither and thither, seeking a way of escape.

" But, Elsa, what else can we do ? You don't want us to set out on a life of intolerable deceit ? "

His words irritated the woman almost beyond endurance : she would have liked to strike him. She hated him for his youth and his stupid assumption

that she must be either divorced wife or secret mistress. But she could not let him go now, disillusioned. Moreover, her desire to dominate his life had become a blind obsession. She spoke quickly, her words, her attitude, instinctive.

“ Oh, you don’t understand. Think—my poor little Marthe. I can’t leave her. I don’t think that Gilbert has ever cared for her, and of late years his novels and his fame have filled his life. What would become of her? Deceit seems a little thing before her tiny clutching hands.”

“ You are sacrificing both of us to her.” The boy spoke harshly.

Elsa turned away and leaned against the wall: she seemed utterly weary.

“ If you force me to do what you ask ”—the low voice stumbled over the words—“ I must follow you. I cannot bear to see you suffer. . . .”

She had not blundered. He spoke shortly. “ No, Elsa, I don’t want a captive: I want a mate. If you will not come to me on my terms, I must even take you on yours.”

Elsa looked up, fearful lest she had gone too far. He sat down on the couch, and after a moment’s hesitation, she slipped down beside him. He did not touch her.

“ Kenneth,” she said slowly, “ I am older than you in years, but I think that I am really younger—much younger. I need you as you do not need me. All my

life I have wanted . . . comradeship—sympathy. Before Gilbert was famous he did share his life with me. But for long now, I have been lonely—you don't know how lonely—Kenneth——” Her voice broke on a cry of pain.

He drew her close and bent her head back so that he could see her face.

“After all—nothing matters but that you love me, woman of mine.” His voice was very low: “I do not care how I have you, so only that I have you. You shall never be lonely any more.” He raised his voice and spoke abruptly. “I can't make love to you in this house. You will not mind coming to me in the bare rooms where you have come so often to see my pictures. I am going there to wait for you—and you will come—now.”

He was gone almost before she knew.

She sprang to her feet and ran across the room, but at the door stopped irresolute. Her success was only half success: she had not meant to pay so heavily. How was it that she had failed to satisfy him with words? Now it was too late: she must pay her debt or let him go. She became aware that she was shaking with excitement. Her thoughts rested with something akin to pleasure on the danger of the situation. She felt vaguely that she understood the great artists—George Sand or Rachel perhaps.

There remained an uneasy sense of having committed herself. . . .

Her eyes fell on the sheets of paper scattered over the table : words and phrases of the unfinished poem leapt to her mind. Running to the bookcase, she took down a volume of Shelley, read feverishly here and there, and with his shifting rhythms in her ears, sat down to make her poem. It was written without pause, and Elsa was pleased with its reeling images. A woman coming too early to a tryst finds her lover in the amorous embrace of a nymph "whose pomegranate lips bled beneath his savage kiss." The phrase delighted her : she repeated it, smiling at herself in the mirror.

In her room, dressing, she felt a sudden rush of affection for her husband. His study was at the end of the passage, and on the way out, she paused and pushed open the door. He looked up from his work at the shining eyes and happy, flushed face. She bent down and kissed his hair.

"Silly boy," she said tenderly, "you work far too hard."

He smiled. "Have you been in mischief, Elsa ?"

She kissed him again, ruffling his hair, and laughed softly.

A tender smile was on her lips as she shut the door behind her. "Poor old Gilbert," she murmured.

On her way to Chelsea, the thought of her lover kept her mind pleasantly active and interested. She was a little annoyed at the clearness of her brain——.

So began her barren unfaith.

CHAPTER V

THE trouble at Brinton's factories dragged on : the men surprised him by their fitful obstinacy : three of his managers had failed him, and their places were not easily filled. For with an unpardonable stupidity, he insisted, even from Italy, upon an honourable treatment of his men. If he did not know that honour may be conceived of only as between equals, his managers did, and openly or covertly, did their utmost to ignore him. He explained indeed that he had known a business philanthropy to be very profitable, but while managers were thick as brambles on a Yorkshire moor, managers who agreed with him were rare indeed. They protested that good treatment unsettled the men, and pointed to his present trouble. So he stayed in London : Carey and Norden saw him often, and between him and Richard Thurlow an unlikely friendship sprang and grew strong.

Brinton followed with delight the fantastic journeyings of the younger man's mind. "Richard," Denar-bon said, "would talk while you flayed the soles of his feet." During these days, coming slowly nearer an intolerable hatred of his life and work, Thurlow talked and argued with an amazing passion. And when he

talked, men had perforce to talk also, to defend themselves from his rapid attack, or keep pace with the most uncertain intellect that ever cursed an honest Socialist.

He wandered much about London at this time, alone or with Athenais, depressed and moody. The brave hopes with which he left college had grown dim. Coming to London he had offered himself to the officials of the I.L.P. He was sent to a local branch and asked to speak at the open air meetings. But it was not long before his speeches were bitterly criticised by the ill-named "comrades." He found himself treated with distrust by the working men of the body and condemned as a University upstart. That he endured with a certain cheerful indifference, flinging himself ceaselessly against the wall of distrust and apathy that met him everywhere. There were educated men among the rest, and he turned to them for sympathy and encouragement. But after a time, he found that these men expected him to join in a stealthy contempt for the working men at their side. He became aware that many of them wrote and spoke with an eye ever turned to the chance of a Career. He raged impotently against their treachery, and turned with the greater eagerness to the ill-educated men whom they were ready to betray. But neither his ardour nor his devotion availed him: and after he had fought for six months, he withdrew, angry and disheartened.

Since that time he had joined no such body of men,

realising tardily that he merited distrust so long as he stayed on the staff of the "Morning News." "But I was prepared to give that up," he told Athenais, "if they or the British Socialists had offered me only ten shillings a week to live on while I worked for them."

Athenais had mocked gently. "Why should you think your brains worth ten shillings a week to them?"

He laughed. "They probably thought that only a fool would ask a fool's wages," he said, and then, "But they would have been worth it . . ." he insisted.

Later he wandered restlessly from obscure groups of revolutionaries to Margaret Destin's cultured young men, disliking both and accepted by neither. While he discussed every belief or idea that floated past him he was still uncertain of his own ground. "What shall I preach?" he said, "and who will lend me a platform?" His academic socialism shattered into fragments at his first step into the industrial jungle. It did not fit the facts: and he was too sane either to lop the facts or to abandon the living faith behind his dead and scattered ideas.

He knew himself one of a vast crowd of young men, burning with anger against the injustice and misery of the social disorder, eager to work, and wasting energy and passion in futile rebellion. Sometimes he met one of these drifting intellectuals, not received by the working men, and hating the methods of the Fabian group. Some had given up the task: others

shouted at street corners and in parks to shifting uninterested crowds.

Thurlow became more obstinate as he lost hope. Too irresolute to take Norden's way of joining himself to every oppressed and rebel sect in Europe, too honestly inconsistent and too helpless in the grip of his ideas to drift into Margaret Destin's net, he remained photographic editor of the "Morning News," and talked to conceal his thoughts. The more dubious speculations of scientists had a strange fascination for him. He would toil through a dreary bog of facts with his inner thoughts turned to some shining and inaccessible consummation, a royal road of science, a vast and satisfying explanation of the world. To all his drifting theories Brinton listened with a tolerant delight, but Athenais, who did not carry Lucretius in her pocket, became slowly impatient.

John Brinton, however, had his own plans for the younger man, and concerned with the means of perfecting them, did not know whether Athenais Garain would help or hinder him. He saw with anxiety her friendship for Margaret Destin, and set himself to draw her away from the danger. He took much trouble to talk to her, and discovered, with a keen pleasure the peculiar scepticism of her intellect. His interest in her became direct. "It would be a pity," he said to Norden, "if she were to become one of Mrs. Destin's jackals. She must be saved!"

"Miss Garain," Norden told him, "is remarkably

well able to take care of herself. And even if she weren't, it is impossible to save a woman from the vagaries of her intellect. Don't meddle."

Summer burned into Autumn. With stealthy fingers the mist stretched out from the river: John Brinton shivered and thought of the clear brown twilight of Florence. His factories were in order: but he stayed in London, watching with a persistence that amazed him over Richard Thurlow's long indecision. He had no intention of picking the young man up between finger and thumb, and setting him to strut on a platform whose supports were the bent figures in the factories. The first stumbling steps must be made unaided. His affection for Thurlow was real, but it was not unmingled with a delicate pleasure in a new experiment. "One might get more pleasure out of collecting men than out of collecting pictures," he said, "and Florence remains."

CHAPTER VI

ATHENAIS sat writing in the room where Margaret held her meetings : Margaret's husband watched her from the window. Robert Destin disliked the bare formal room, and never entered it unless he wanted something that he could not find elsewhere. At this moment he wanted Athenais with the single-minded desire of a child. His eyes, restless and shadowed, hid his thoughts.

He thought with dissatisfaction of his quest of beauty. Never a fair woman but had a defect that came to be an unforgiveable blemish, an irritation that did not cease until he had fled from the annoyance of her imperfect beauty. Athenais had not a beautiful face : it was too nearly square, the forehead too ungainly : he had known eyes more beautiful than hers, though never any so deep, changing so with every change of mood. He delighted in the triumphant oddness of her face, thus strangely defying the perfect body. " You are the one woman in ten thousand," his thoughts ran, " whose imperfections are more potent than other women's beauty." An irrelevant image jerked itself out of the chaos. " Your hands are like the quiver of wings."

He thought that he would like to take Athenais with him to Florence. He knew a room overlooking a tiny stream that bent the deep grass of a meadow silently. In the distance grey olive trees hung in the clear air: the road wound up the hillside to the monastery hidden behind its ilex groves. In the room itself the huge bed was hung with black and faded gold: he had thought that beneath the black he could detect dim colours and figures, long faded, like the hand of the weaver. All the rest of the room was empty save for the heavy chairs in the shadows, and a vase set on a bracket set high in the wall. He saw the vase distinctly: it was squat and clumsy of form, yellow as a crocus, undimmed and undaunted by the desolation of the room. There he had brought the slender girl who sold plaited rings and pierced coins near the San Marco. She used to saturate her hair with a scent that pricked his senses. He thought of her little broken laugh, and eager response to his whimsical ardour. She had a mole between her breasts: how well he remembered. She had not liked the bare darkened room, and one day she disappeared. He remembered suddenly a glimpse of her caught in Greek Street, or a girl like enough to amuse his fancy for the moment. That was three years later: she had chattered of a brother in London.

His thoughts darted back to Athenais: he drew her up the narrow stairs to another room in Florence, small and white, that he had once filled with flowers

for an English girl who never came. He would buy them again for Athenais—armsful of them—white and yellow. He saw her bending over them: he would stand beside her, and hold her suddenly close, all the wonder of her grace within his arms. . . .

He became conscious that he was growing cold, and he moved over to the fireplace. "Miss Garain," he said.

Athenais looked up from her writing, with the direct and candid gaze that masked a most uncandid and subtle mind.

‘ As wise as wise, with her cat’s eyes,
As any living thing. . . .’

The lines leaped into Robert Destin’s head from some buried memory. He forgot them on the instant.

"Miss Garain, are you nearly finished with that writing? I want to talk to you."

"I am only correcting proofs," said Athenais, "I can listen to you and correct the proofs at the same time."

Destin spoke out of random thoughts. "Do you know anything about mystical poetry, Miss Garain?—you know the stuff I mean—all visions and low voices and essences and things."

Athenais smiled. "I’m afraid that I don’t know much. I should think that Mrs. Carey could tell you."

Destin’s face took on an expression of exaggerated horror. He had wearied himself for three weeks

before he realised that Elsa Carey's kisses were as barren as the amorous visions of a crazed hermit. "A chaste harlot," he said to himself, contempt jostling annoyance.

He came over to the table and stood beside Athenais : she did not look up, and while he sought for words, his wife came into the room, and he went with a graceless reluctance.

As the door closed behind him, Athenais pushed the papers from her.

"All finished, *madonna mia*," she said.

Margaret did not look at them. She pulled at some pamphlets with a half-conscious movement, and fingered them restlessly before she spoke.

"Athenais," she said, "when are you going to make up your mind?"

Athenais hesitated, uncertain and despondent. There was no uncertainty in Margaret's mind : the girl's work at the School of Economics was nearly over, and Margaret was arranging her life with the same affectionate tyranny that had hastened Robert Destin's rebellion. She was to be Margaret's own secretary, and then the secretary of the Executive-Council-of-the-National-Committee-for-Social-Reform, and many years later, when Margaret was weary of dominion, to take her place as its President.

"Why do you want to do so much for me?" Athenais spoke abruptly.

"Because you are competent and scholarly—two

qualities rarely found in one woman : because I love you : because you are Heloise Garain's daughter . . .” Margaret went on quickly. “ We work by ways of which you do not approve : you can try to better them. You dislike many of the women who work hardest—why, so do I. But these things ought not to hinder you from working with them—and me. You can't doubt your ability. . . .”

Athenias, inwardly mutinous, shrank from hurting the older woman by open rebellion. She had evaded, with an obstinate gentleness, all Margaret's efforts to help her. Margaret became insistent, and still Athenais hesitated.

“ You don't know what I am thinking,” she said slowly. “ You offer me a royal road to a certain—power. It has tempted me in the past : almost it tempts me now : I am not without ambition. But you don't understand. When I left college I wanted—most intensely—to do something. All people who call themselves socialists want to do something. But first I wanted to understand what life was getting at.”

Margaret made an impatient gesture.

“ Ah, wait,” Athenais said, “ I am not talking a vague philosophy. But I see all these people, Fabians, Democrats, New Tories, Suffragettes, New Aristocrats, every kind of reformer, all going somewhere, all trying for something, something that they call the good of man. But each goes a different way, each looks for a different good. The Fabian regards the poor somehow as a putrifying corpse : he takes out

his handkerchief and a note book and sits down to classify the smells. Also he has remedies for each. The New Aristocrat thinks finely and—cultivates his garden. And so . . . I wanted to understand, to test all these people and their ways, and so perhaps to find a key to their confusion of tongues.”

“It will take you all your life,” said Margaret, “and nothing done.”

The girl leaned forward and spoke earnestly. “But if I can make other people stop and try to understand with me ? . . .”

“Oh, my dear, no one will stop to think. They are all too busy living. At least we on the National Committee work for our idea of justice. Have you tried us and found us wanting ?” Margaret smiled a little wistfully.

Athenais saw the smile : pity seized her, and contempt of her own youth and arrogant wisdom. “I criticise while you work,” she cried. “Mine is a poor part.” Regretting the words she swept on.

“Oh, Margaret, dearest Margaret, second mother of mine, I want to please you, I want to help you, but I can’t—in the way you wish. Here is your National Committee : its Executive Council is the most powerful group of women in England. It uses the best brains of many of the best young men and women in the British Isles : you possess the finest and most complete information on every social subject : you pull wires, influence members of Parliament, push on

innumerable reforms. But what reforms are they? All—every one of them—go to make every department of life nearer a rigid system arranged and managed by your young competents. You meddle with the children. They are to be fed, washed and clothed in the schools. But why can't it be done in their homes? Is it because your young men wouldn't be able to count the petticoats, and watch the peeling of the potatoes? You reform the Poor Law. The workhouses aren't to be workhouses any longer, but by some other name much sweeter to the poor who end their old age there. There, by a wave of your wand, the husks of charity become the bread of justice, and the ancient recipients are morally satisfied and uplifted by their new status—which is after all only another name for better buildings. I could go on for hours asking why you order and arrange men's lives for them instead of working to give them money and time to live without your help and away from your benevolent eye.

As a remedy for bad government you suggest—more government! Why, it's silly. . . . Like offering a cripple stacks of crutches to cure his lameness. . . . Thinking that by multiplying the opportunities for abuse you will lessen the abuses. As if governments and abuses had not been synonymous everywhere and always. . . .

But look at the people—the women you work with: women who can't rule their own homes, but spend a lifetime trying to rule the homes of the poor—the only class that can't hit back. Poor women

mayn't even have children now, without the supervision of your amateur midwives, most of whom never had a child in all their tidy married lives——"

Somewhere within the stiff unmoving Margaret a woman reeled and shuddered, sick with her pain. The thin clear voice had thrust under her guard.

"The poor . . . a wretched lay figure on which a thousand itching brains and fingers satisfy their need to interfere and rule. . . . Yet even these women are more tolerable than the women round Elsa Carey, all crying out for independence and the needs of their spirits, when what they really want is liberty to do anything that suggests itself to their rattling heads. If they only knew what the factory girl and the girl clerk thought of the spiritual happiness to be enjoyed in factories and offices, they would keep a little quieter." Athenais, pausing for the first time, caught sight of Margaret's nervous fingers.

"Oh, forgive me," she said, "please forgive me—but I can't work with you—you must see that now."

"Yes." Margaret's voice was harsh.

Self-contempt caught at the girl: she stood silent, helpless and ashamed. Margaret went on.

"Just this: you have condemned our methods as those of kindly slave-drivers. They seem to me those of wise guides who would lead the people till they are able to walk alone."

Athenais made a gesture of despair: Margaret smiled gently. "Do not leave us yet," she said. "I

will not worry you again. But wait just a little while, come here oftener, and listen to the women talking . . . Then you will see the worst and the best of us."

When Athenais had gone, the woman stood long silent, thinking, in the bitterness of her grief, that her love and her passionate service had failed her for the second time.

"If I had given less . . . and asked less . . . I might have succeeded."

Who knows? Restless and unhappy soul, there is no one who will tell you whether your tardy wisdom be wisdom indeed.

Athenais walked back to Chelsea. Half-way along the street in which were the rooms that Margaret had sought and found for her, she caught sight of Elsa Carey. With a swift backward glance that missed Athenais, the woman hurried up the steps of the house where Kenneth Knowles had his studio and tiny flat. Seeing her, the girl's unrest turned to an insensate disgust and anger. She turned and walked blindly away.

She did not know how long she walked seeking physical weariness, and desiring above all things to go back to the fair North and the sea. Unseeing, unhearing, she walked along Piccadilly and down the Haymarket. Grey cliffs rose behind her: grey winds swept out of a grey sea, and darkened the heavens.

She was on the Embankment near the Temple Gardens: there were trees and seats beneath them. She was not tired, but her sense of humour, moment-

arily recovering itself, bade her sit down and pray for sanity. She chose a seat near the entrance.

There John Brinton found her half an hour later, upright and motionless, her eyes fixed on the pageant of the river. He spoke to her, and amused at the abstracted kindliness of her reply, took the small green chair beside her.

“Miss Garain—I wonder what you are doing here?”

“Thinking.” Athenais was too absorbed to be aware of discourtesy.

“I have often thought it strange,” Brinton spoke reflectively, “that people should choose an uncomfortable chair and a strained attitude, in which to think at large. Yet most people do, you know.”

Athenais smiled, and made an effort to listen.

He went on. “I have known the habit to do serious harm. In Paris I met a young artist: when I knew him first, his work had a charming frankness—sun splashed villages, and women with neat thoughtful faces like those of the early Parmese Madonnas. Then he began to think o’ nights. He had a theory—it was very old, though he thought it new—that all art might be expressed in terms of number. So that the perfect picture was a unit, but a bad one might depart from the centre of perfection by fifty or a million. I fear that I am putting it very crudely, but indeed, I hardly understood him.”

“What became of him?”

“When I saw him last, he was painting distorted

women, and queer concentric circles of colour. They looked like one of your underground railways: he said that they were symbols of creative activity."

Indifference slipped from Athenais: she turned to him a little eagerly. "I should like to have lived your life," she said.

"You would have spoiled it," he told her, "with too much eagerness for living." He murmured to himself. "When I was young I went to Paris: I sought out artists and musicians, and lived in studios and cafés. I talked until dawn: with incredible labour I made a name as a stealer of other men's models. I shared a studio with a young Irishman who painted large vacant pictures of straggling women, and followed the great men from café to café, recording their words. Afterwards he made a book of them. I did not read it, but I daresay it was a bad book. After some months of effort he made favour with a Swedish poetess, who kept him very generously till she wearied of him." He stopped: his voice expressed a faint disgust. "Artists, even real artists, are a mercenary crowd—for the most part. There are exceptions. It is as if their art absorbed whatever of worth they may possess in their natures. And all the rest is mean and poor—jealousies, boastings, lies, desires fouled with scheming and treachery."

He was silent: Athenais waited.

"Almost without warning I was seized with a hatred of life among them. I left their cafés and

their quarrels, and their haggles over women's flesh, and came away. I fled that very night, fearing to trust my new wisdom to another day's thought. I never went back to Paris."

He had not forgotten that he was resolved to save her, and with only a moment's hesitation came deftly to his self-imposed task.

"I was amused," he said, "when I came to London to find all over again, men like my Irishman, and women like his Swedish poetess—the same desires, the same habits, but so curiously different in their methods. They discuss Strindberg and morality: women meet in studios and salons to hear lectures on the mystical essence of art by some young artist who is very beautiful, and wears a black cloak over a blue silk shirt. Their eyes are fixed upon him, and I am reminded of the naked youth that Niccola Pisano carved upon a pulpit in Pisa—a symbol of Fortitude perhaps—and from his pulpit monks stormed against the sins of the flesh, before women who could not look away from the beautiful youth beneath him." He smiled. "You never meet a genuine artist in these salons, and at these dreadful lectures in Hampstead and Kensington—only the fantastic playboys of art—the men and women who write those jagged poems, and paint those incomprehensible pictures, like the nightmares of a mathematician, and carry on those endless discussions of art and religion. They don't rouse you: they exhaust you—they exhaust them-

selves—dragging the insides out of life and each other, and holding them up to be stared at—like vivisectors gone mad. Some of them are really virtuous : others, like my Irishman, are virtuous only when lack of opportunity compels.”

Athenais was leaning back in her uncomfortable chair, her eyes half closed. He did not think that she was deceived by Elsa Carey’s artistic mad-house, and decided that he had said enough. It was the influence of Margaret Destin that he feared.

“After all, they do no harm, these poor folk, and they amuse themselves. But I don’t know why Mrs. Destin—who is my very good friend—has gathered round her these aridly efficient women, whose intellects stop short of culture and——”

Athenais interrupted him suddenly. “Don’t talk to me about them, Mr. Brinton. I am hardly sane on the question. I hate them—I hate their ways.” She stopped, abruptly aware of her raised voice and her absurd excitement. “I am so sorry——” His startled face amused her, and she began to laugh a little helplessly.

In the midst of his satisfaction, John Brinton remembered Norden’s warning : he was uneasily conscious of having wasted time and thought. The next moment he realised that the girl was making a convulsive effort after self-control : her eyes, shining with a nervous excitement, looked dreadfully at an approaching ordeal. While he sought for words, she

had placed herself beyond the need of his help, and was facing him with a friendly smile.

He was seized with a sudden admiration of her self-possession, seeing for the first time her youth and her incredible loneliness, understanding in one moment of insight her bewildered groping among the dry water-channels of modern faiths, and her unnatural silence. She had lived for three years among older women and men of assured experience : he did not think that any one of them had been actively aware of her youth. She had made no false step, been swept away by no girlish admiration for the power and glory of Margaret Destin's kingdom. Yet she must have often been shaken and impressed, or at least bewildered and uncertain. He felt ashamed that he had rarely thought of her but as a help or a hindrance to his plans for Richard Thurlow.

"Mr. Brinton," said Athenais, "it's very good of you to talk to me about all these things," her eyes mocked him kindly, "but I don't believe that you were thinking of my welfare so much as fearing that I might have an evil influence on Richard."

Brinton leaned towards her. "You must forgive me," he said. "It has never been my way to pry into the lives of other men. I have not that warrant to meddle and alter which is given to inquisitors—priests and others—who make this life intolerable on the ground that they prepare for a future one. And if I

have pried into your thoughts to-day—forgive me. . . . I did not understand.” He hesitated.

Athenais spoke impulsively. “You are really kind : I am glad that you think so much of Richard : he could not have a better friend.”

They were silent, and in the gathering dusk Athenais shivered.

“You are cold,” Brinton said, “let us walk back to the Strand.”

But Athenais would not move, and asked only to be left alone : he went, and left her there.

Behind the Houses of Parliament the hidden sun turned the smoke of London into an iridescent mist of shifting purple and brown : across it the spires and slender strength of Westminster formed part of a sombre scaffolding for the arches of night : along the Embankment the lights struggled with the passing daylight like pale ghosts in a city of dreams, and beyond them roofs and towers and spires swayed and changed in the darkening haze, through which the sounds of the City came muffled and strange.

Athenais stood up, stiff and cold, and walked slowly towards Blackfriars Bridge. Her imagination circled dully round Margaret’s pitiful disappointment. Power of coherent thought seemed taken from her : a torturing indecision held her perilously over an abyss. “What shall I do if I refuse to work with them ?” She repeated the words, but did not understand them. “Shall I teach Economics and write articles for

Socialist papers?" She was shaken by a silent laughter. The faces of the men and women in the street impressed her as hideous. "Work for *these*?—that leering obscenity, that giggling ape, animals with the hair dropped off." She shrank from them. "I must be ill, I must be ill," she thought, and then, "Don't be a fool—you must be hysterical."

She remembered suddenly that Margeret wanted a design for the cover of a new pamphlet issued by the Executive Council. She had spoken of Denarbon, and Margaret, interested, promised to give him the work instead of taking any one of a dozen designs offered her freely. Athenais thought that she would speak to him before the secretary's official request was sent out, and she wondered whether he were still at his studio in Hampstead. She took a bus and went there. He was in, though not working, and was glad to see her. She spoke of the design, and he readily accepted the commission.

"ThurLOW was here only half an hour ago," he told her; "he is very restless just now, Thea."

A look of distress passed over her face. "I wish——" She hesitated and then finished abruptly. "I wish he could make up his mind to something."

Denarbon reflected. "He thinks too much, you know. But he doesn't think down to the depths—where it's quiet. . . . And poverty is an ill he knows not of. . . . There were once men in the world who could think and act at the same time. Nowadays it would

seem that those who act never think beyond the moment, while those who think cannot act. Thurlow wonders so long whether a course of action is right that he ends in doing nothing. Yet, you know, he is right—in a way. Think of all the mistakes we made at college before we began to doubt and hesitate.”

Athenais laughed joyously. “Do you remember when Richard had gone home to London ill,” she said, “how we two went down to the meetings of the local Socialists and the I.L.P.?”

He caught her up eagerly. “Yes, yes—and our enthusiasm—we thought we were going to help save the world—and those unspeakable meetings!”

“Do you remember the Clarion Rooms and the meat pies they sold at the little counter just inside the door, and the lemonade that was too weak to splutter? And one Sunday night in a spasm of anger, the little man—the atheist, you remember—threw the meat pie he was munching at the fat man who had read the Bible through nine times. . . .”

“And the Christian Socialist wiped the fragments from his eyes, and went on with his speech—bits of crust and jelly stuck in his hair all night. And afterwards we saw him picking pieces off his tie and eating them.”

Athenias became serious. “We laughed all the way home, I remember—but, Henry, you haven’t forgotten how bitterly disappointed we were—and how we held on for weeks, encouraging each other,

before we gave up, disillusioned and terribly ashamed of ourselves."

"They hated us because we came from the University," Denarbon said, "and we couldn't blame them. But they hated anything that savoured of intelligence; at any suggestion that didn't make for the immediate gain of a penny a day, any hint that they might use their power for something more than the getting of pennies—what a passion of scorn and abuse arose on the instant!"

"And the quarrels, the incessant petty quarrels and disunion among them. They were united only against us. Do you remember the man who would glare at us and shout—'I've read Shelley, h'and Keats, h'and Shakespeare, and I don't see as 'ow h'anyone has the right to look dahn on me.'"

Denarbon smiled. "I do. And I haven't forgotten how one night he said that he had read all that William Morris had ever written. And you, thinking to be tactful, confessed cheerfully that you had never read a line of him, and thereupon lost what little respect and influence you had."

"We *were* rather bumptious," Athenais reflected. "But the pity of it, There they were, those men and women, working all day and turning to read in the evening. And just reading anything—only half understanding, toiling over the bad as well as the good, with no one to guide them, wasting brain and body in their terrible pathetic desire to know things."

"They wouldn't have let us help if we'd tried," Denarbon answered. "Not even their own people helped them. Think of the awful gulf fixed between the local I.L.P. and the officials who controlled the party. All over the country these little groups of men—discussing anything from the repudiation of the National Debt to the system of peasant proprietorship—with never an economist among them—gaping, talking, squabbling over little jealousies—someone not thanked, someone pushing himself on to committees. . . . And away up, the officials—desiring nothing but votes and sixpences from the branches, immersed in sordid political intrigues, caring not the twist of a button for the enlightenment of the shuffling souls in the little room with the counter behind the door."

Athenais nodded. "I think the worst of all were the few pseudo-educated men that they did tolerate. You remember those men from the Training College?"

"All protected with an armour plate of Labour pamphlets."

"Just that. Painfully naive they were for all their education. They believed that the whole truth, on any subject of importance, had been written in little pamphlets. . . . They were bursting with economic shockers—horrible scandals—any war was sufficiently explained by saying: "You know Tuckers, the great munition manufacturers—well they got the Government to go to war just to use their guns. No Tuckers, no war. . . ." I shouldn't wonder if they believed the

House of Lords to be a menace to the nation. . . . If there had been a Labour pamphlet written to prove that black is black, they insisted on ramming it at you.

Whereas you know—as I know—that black is not black at all but a kind of dirty grey or brown. . . . One might even want to argue, and with good cause, that black was sometimes bright yellow. . . . They would think that mere perversity. . . .”

Denarbon nodded. “After that we suspected everything: do you remember how we fought the Society for Fabian Study? And—more or less—we’ve suspected everything since then. But I have come to believe that it is madness to go on doubting. You know what Blake says:—

“If the sun and moon should doubt
They’d immediately go out.”

If you are to do anything you must work with the bent old tools that are to hand. Look at this——” he crossed the room, and picked a rough crayon drawing from a pile on the floor. A naked man crouched on the ground beside the wall of a cave where he had carved the rough figure of a horse. He was looking down at the clumsy tool in his hand: his face was shadowed by straggling hair, and something in the attitude of the bowed shoulders expressed a dawning understanding that his achievement was poor.

Athenais looked, noting the freely drawn lines, and the suggestion of power in the head and hands.

“Is that a design for a figure?” she asked.

"Yes : but that is not why I showed it to you. I wanted you to see what I mean. Suppose the primitive sculptor had thrown his tools down in despair——"

"I see," the girl said. He went on.

"I couldn't take up the tools we flung down at college, but I've found a new one. It's sadly imperfect, but it cuts."

"Tell me."

"Have you ever heard of a group calling themselves Pioneers ? "

Athenais shook her head.

"I thought Thurlow might have told you about them : I met him at one of their meetings. Well, they are a group of men and women in revolt against all the old forms of Socialism : they reject Labour men, B.S.P. and Fabians alike. So far so good : but they have all the faults of their virtues. They have done little more than talk of rebellion, and there are all the old types of fool and knave among them. But I do verily believe that there is a new spirit struggling in their struggles. They interfered in a strike among the builders, and it was not the little money they gave that counted, but the strange enthusiasm they kept up among the men—and what is more, among the women. I heard one woman, weak for want of food, say, 'Why, we've been half-clemmed so often that it's no so hard to be clemmed to death.' They held on and won the strike." He was speaking with an unconscious eagerness.

It reached and fired the girl. The depression of the past weeks was swept away in an overwhelming passion of sympathy. She had not known before how weary she was. She stammered a little, confused by the light. "Oh, let me help you, let me help you—I am so tired of doing nothing. Don't leave me alone, Henry."

"Why, Thea——"

He hid his quick understanding and pity. "I thought you were too busy with your degree in Economics to do anything else. If you will work with me—you don't need to be told how glad I will be. But I don't want you to make any promises: you will have to face disappointments, sometimes you will despair, as we did before. But come and see for yourself." He went on with a sudden change of tone. "Thea, I'm awfully hungry: I've not had anything to eat since yesterday, and this afternoon I had five pounds from an editor who has taken a series of sketches. Come and have some supper."

"Why did you let me keep you here talking?" Athenais stormed at him. "I don't want any supper, but I'll go into town with you and take a bus from there."

Denarbon locked up the studio, and put the key under the door-mat.

"The man I share the place with gets here in the morning before I do," he explained.

On the top of the bus Athenais talked with hardly

a pause : he thought that he caught a note of strain in her laughter, and flung a steady rope.

“ Have you ever been hungry, Athenais ? ”

She smiled at him. “ Why, yes, often. Just think. I have a hundred and twenty a year. I pay my landlady a pound a week for my rooms and my breakfast. My college fees and books cost another twenty-five pounds. That leaves a little under a pound a week for my food and clothes, and stamps and fares—and oh, everything. I have sometimes sat with Mrs. Destin in the Dress Circle in the St. James’s, just so hungry that the little cups of coffee they bring round made me angry. I took last year’s exams on one meal a day—and did well.” She laughed happily : “ And sometimes when I have plenty of money I am so utterly tired of the food one gets at cafés that I don’t eat anything.”

“ Thea, when are you going to marry Thurlow ? ”

The girl hesitated. “ I can’t marry him until I have finished at the School of Economics, you know : a married student is an absurdity.”

“ I don’t see that,” he said.

“ You do really,” she assured him. “ Would you have liked to be married when you were at college ? Besides—we should have to live in rooms. So long as I am at college I can’t look after a house now, can I ? And the hardships and the—the intimacy—of married life in rooms would be—intolerable. Things you can endure alone become unbearable when you share them.”

"I wonder," he said, doubtfully.

They parted in Piccadilly Circus, beneath the flash and counter-flash of electric signs, in the patterned brilliance of a London evening. As Athenais went home, she was thinking intently, her eyes dark beneath drawn brows.

For the first time during many weeks, she worked contentedly until eleven o'clock. Her old deaf landlady came painfully along the passage, past the door of her sitting-room. The girl heard her fumbling at the bolts of the front door: then the slow steps returning, died away on the stairs. The old woman had gone to her bed in some dim warm corner of the basement kitchens. Athenais waited awhile, and then, treading softly along the passage, drew back the bolts and went upstairs.

Half an hour later she was sitting on the edge of her bed, brushing out the long dark hair that hung straitly on either side of her face. She looked at the clock and a half-conscious resentment entered her mind. Thurlow was very late. She shivered in her thin gown. A moment later, the door opened softly and he came in. He dropped his hat and coat across a chair, and held out his arms. She smiled at him but did not move. He crossed slowly to the bed and seated himself beside her.

"Athenais, I'm tired." He laid his head against her shoulder. She turned and put both arms round him, pulling him down so that he lay in her arms.

Bending over him she kissed his closed eyes. He pressed his face against the warmth of her breast. Her loneliness and her desire for sympathy died in an overwhelming tenderness and pity.

"I love you," she said to him, "I love you—I will take such care of you." She gathered him closer in her arms: a vague dread crossed her eyes: she put back his hair and touched his lips with tremulous fingers.

After a while she spoke, half to herself. "I went up to Henry's studio this evening, and he talked about the people he is working with. They call themselves the Pioneers—it is a stupid name. I am thinking of helping him."

He freed himself with a sudden movement and sat up.

"You're jesting, sweetheart: you are not going to join *that* crew."

"Why not?" She was startled, and vaguely hurt that he had shaken off her arms so abruptly.

"Because they are little more than a multitude of well-meaning but helpless workers, led by a company of fools and knaves."

Unconsciously, he spoke with a touch of sharpness.

"Have you seen or heard them?"

"I have so." His scornful tone pointed at the Pioneers, but it irritated her: the weary strife of the past days swept into a mounting resentment of her lover's contemptuous speech.

"At least, they are not meddlesome intellectuals, and they don't talk."

"On the contrary: they have never done anything but talk, and never will."

Both were now more than a little angry: they stood up and stared at each other. Athenais spoke hastily.

"You are the last person in the world to say that. You stay on the 'Morning News' although you hate and despise its methods."

"One must live," he interrupted her.

"There are other ways of living. You think, and think, and there is nothing behind your thoughts but more thoughts. You talk—about anything that comes into your head—not meaning more than half of what you say. You've been out of college nearly three years, and still you don't know what you mean to do with your knowledge and your intellect. You're no better than a derelict intellectual: you ought to be writing Fabian tracts."

There was just enough truth in the words to push Thurlow to the verge of his control. At that moment the beauty of her body angered him.

He struck blindly.

"You talk like one of those hysterical females that flock round Elsa Carey. Who would have thought that all their windy nonsense of rebellion would carry you away at the first breath.?"

He laughed. She was tremendously self-possessed, for all the trembling of her limbs.

"Will you go now? I don't want to hear any more."

"Certainly I'll go." His coolness met hers. The pain that struck at him was wellnigh unbearable. He held out his arms through the heavy shadows.

"Athenais—dear heart—don't let's be silly—dear little Thea. Forgive me : I love you so."

He had spoken too soon : she thrust down his outstretched arm. "Why are you waiting : don't you understand ? I don't want you—not now, nor to-morrow, nor any day."

He went on that. Ten minutes after he had gone, Athenais crept downstairs. She bolted the door, and then, in the chill sitting-room, waited for him to come back and try it. Dawn broke behind grey sweep of rain : shivering with cold, she gave way to passionate weeping.

Thurlow walked about Chelsea half the night, and then went home to write a letter. Remembering the dawn's bitter weakness, Athenais burnt it unopened, and when in the evening he came to her rooms would not see him. Two days later her father wrote that he would be in England within the week, and she went North to make the house ready for him. Thurlow, tardily wise, waited in silence.

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

A YOUNG man looked dejectedly round the café: it was small, over-decorated, filled with underdressed women. He gazed at the bare heaving bosoms with the hungry disgust of a vegetarian before a butcher's shop. Depressed by the swept and garnished faces above them he turned to stare at the sprawling pink limbs that covered the ceiling. "Raphael," he reflected, "would be sorry if he knew that he had taught so many bad painters to cover the difficult parts of the human body with clouds."

George Masson was the son of a wealthy English Catholic. He himself intended to enter the priesthood: meanwhile, he amassed memories. Already twenty-five years old, he was still at the Sorbonne, and writing a thesis on the Christian commentators of Plato. He was happy in Paris: with a little audacity he had made the acquaintance of a middle-aged Marquise in search of a lover. He filled a need, without passion it is true, but cheerfully, and according to his standard, honestly. She was generous, grudging no money to satisfy his tastes. He shared all the sensations of a well-fed cat, except the cat's natural cynicism. Cynic he was, but only in cafés, and to conceal an inherent dislike for the necessity of thought.

The cynic is excused from thinking: it is sufficient that he appear to do so, like a bad-tempered parrot.

At the present moment Masson was regretting a sentimental impulse. Returning to London after an absence of five years he had chanced to meet again the companion of his earliest adventure. Stirred by affectionate memories, he begged her to meet him in the café of past days. She had hesitated and promised. He wished that she had refused. "She is sure to talk of the past—perhaps to reproach me." His dejection grew.

The curtains at the back of the room parted, and a girl came slowly towards him. She was dark-skinned, with heavy eyebrows and oddly irregular features: viewed in profile, the sides of her face bore little resemblance to each other. In the exhausted air of the room she was supremely young and healthy: she moved with an exaggerated ease.

Masson pushed back his chair. "You are very late, Julie," he said.

"I'm sorry." She smiled at him frankly, and settled herself in the corner of a couch. "But, you know, it's not like old times, when I had no one but you to consider."

"I suppose it's not." He spoke bitterly.

She smiled. "Oh, George—how absurd you are. I believe you would like to be jealous."

He frowned, vaguely disconcerted.

"Well, Julie, I thought—but after all—no one expects a woman to be capable of any lasting feeling."

She stared at him, and then leaning back, laughed happily.

"Oh, you are just too silly. Did you think I would come with ashes on my head to reproach you for a five years' silence? Are you disappointed not to have found a weeping victim?"

He struggled with his sense of ill-usage and set himself to take a justifiable revenge.

"Why no," he said, "but I was really afraid that you would cry or scold. You did both five years ago."

She flushed. "If you're going to talk in that disgusting fashion, I'm going."

But he was satisfied with the success of his taunt, and made a show of apology.

"Well, let me see the card," she said, and ordered the tea with an absorbed pleasure.

"Now talk to me," he demanded. "Tell me what you have been doing all this time. Do you still live in that little Hampstead flat with your brother? If I am remembering rightly you wrote once, to Paris, and told me, with a charming malice, that you were engaged to be married. 'To an honourable man' you said—a mining engineer who was going to South Africa."

She did not seem to notice the insolence. "It is true that I am engaged, but not to a mining engineer."

"No?"

"To an artist—a friend of my brother."

"Oh," he said, "very poor and very ardent, I expect."

"He is poor," she told him, with a touch of defiance,

"but he will not always be poor. My brother thinks his work finer than that of any living artist in France or England. He's a sculptor."

"Ah, may I know his name?"

She hesitated. "His name," she said reluctantly. "is Denarbon—Henry Denarbon." He knows your friend Mr. Norden, so that you may perhaps meet him."

Masson smiled. "Then," he said, labouring his irony, "I am more happy than the kings of the earth, in that I can view the fortune and conduct of my successor in the realm."

She held out her hand for his cup. "I really don't know what you mean, George, but I expect it is something unpleasant."

He looked at her closely. "You are not much changed," he told her, "a little rounder perhaps. You were the least bit unfinished when I met you. You should be grateful to me: I have made you more attractive."

"You have the gratitude you deserve," she said.

Half an hour later, he stood at the top of Duke Street and watched her taxi as it disappeared round the corner. That she had consoled herself so well seemed to him a little shameless. He walked moodily along Piccadilly. The clouds hung heavily over the City, resting on the roofs of distant buildings. In the centre of the Circus the flower girls looked cold and cheerless. Masson shivered and turned to walk back.

He had been in London a fortnight and seen no one

but Norden. Norden had not been glad to see him, but had introduced him to several men. He remembered one of them, a tall muscular man by the name of Thurlow, smoking a pipe that gurgled vilely. He could not remember whether any one of them had been called Denarbon. The talk had wearied him. "Execrable philosophy," he said, "and doubtful economics." Later, he learned that these same men gathered in Norden's rooms every Friday evening—to talk. He could not understand them: he had talked himself, in Parisian cafés, discussing the philosophy of art and minute problems of sex. But then—he was full of wine at the time. These men, growing hot in intellectual discussion, took a sober pleasure in talking for its own sake. He was a little contemptuous.

At this moment he caught sight of Norden on the other side of the road, hatless in the November air. On his feet were a pair of red mocassins. Masson watched him in a wonder that became horror as Norden crossed the street and seized him by the arm. Such lapses of memory were very well in the Quartier Latin, but in Piccadilly Circus they were incredible and unforgiveable.

Norden spoke with a gesture of absurd despair. "I was coming to look for you," he said.

"You must have been in urgent need," Masson remarked, "or you wouldn't have forgotten to change your slippers."

Norden swept on unheeding. From his fragmentary

and anguished speech, Masson understood that earlier in the afternoon he had been visited by two apostles of the Pan-Slav ideal, one of whom he had met in Warsaw. He had made them welcome, given them coffee, and set them to talk of their hopes and plans. "The fool," he said, "the unspeakable fool that I was!" One was a writer of Czech poetry from Prague, the other a Greater Russian, a member of the Duma. Within ten minutes their voices were raised, their faces flushed with anger. At the end of half an hour the poet flung his coffee in the politician's face: the politician pulled the poet's beard, and Norden had separated them after a breathless struggle. Later they quarrelled again: this time the Czech swept off the side-board one of Norden's most precious pieces of china, and flung upon the hearth a second edition of Rabelais.

Norden's landlady, trembling in the passage, begged him to stop the uproar. In despair Norden had fled the house for help.

"I can't turn them out, you know," he said, "neither of them has anywhere to go."

He did not say that he had already promised to help them back to Russia or Austria.

"It's Friday," he added. "Thurlow, and Brinton, and the others will come in this evening. I thought that if I collected them now and set them to talk at those Pan-Slavs I might save something. Oh my poor room, my books——"

The amusement of the passers-by unnerved Masson : he called a taxi and pushed Norden into it. " Now tell him where you want to be," he said.

They went to Gerrard Street, and John Brinton joined them a little reluctantly. " Where now ? " asked Masson.

" Denarbon's studio, where we may—at this time—find Thurlow."

" Did I meet Mr. Denarbon at your rooms the other night ? "

" No : I don't know why he didn't come. He talks well : he is very young, and very dissatisfied—too dissatisfied, in fact, to be a good artist. An artist should have the complacency of a cow, in all matters not concerned with his art."

" The lives of the great artists are against you," Brinton told him. " What of—say—Benvenuto Cellini, beater of his mistress, murderer of his rivals, seer of visions."

" A great craftsman merely."

" Michael Angelo."

" Not with the greatest artists. His characteristic work is restless and incomplete. The age tortured him. Look at the figure we call Dawn : pain and horror are in the confused stirring of her body, and the opening eyes. She sees Italy ruined and shamed."

In the studio they found Thurlow and Denarbon. The two friends had toasted muffins over the handful of fire, filled them with butter, sardines and salad oil,

and they refused to leave them. Norden protested and implored. "You can bring them in the taxi," he said.

"They cannot," said Brinton.

"Oh, very well." Thurlow abandoned his plate. "But you know, they'll not be the same when they're warmed again. No muffin would."

At Porchester Gardens, Gilbert Carey was pushed into the over-crowded taxi. They reached Norden's rooms to find the front door standing open, and his landlady peering from the top step.

"Oh, Mr. Norden," she said, "whatever have you been doing? They're gone out together—but what they did before they went—never—Mr. Norden—never since I played the cat in Dick Whittington, have I seen the like."

Norden hurried past her into his sitting-room: the others followed on his cry. To their first bewilderment the room seemed the battle ground of huge cats: the floor was strewn with fragments of fur. In one corner an overturned couch hunched itself miserably on books and shattered pottery. An armchair leaned perilously over an enormous fire, which had been stirred by a furious hand until the flames leaped out and singed the hanging tassels of the mantel-cover. In the centre of the room a solitary chair stood unmaimed and resolute.

The landlady had followed them into the room: Norden turned towards her with a helpless gesture. She was prepared to weep, and her words gradually

twisted themselves into confusion. She had listened in the passage, torn between her anguished vision of murdered foreigners and her fear of Norden's wrath if she called in the police.

"At last," she said, "I couldn't stand it any longer, and I went in and spoke to them—not in their awful monkey-talk, but in English, you understand. The little one, he was tearing the fur off the other one's collar and they both turned on me—and oh, Mr. Norden—the discourse was abominable. Never have I been so spoken to—not even when I was with Sir Herbert, and particular as he was, there got queer sorts in his company at times—but I will say for him, there was not a kinder man in the Profession, and fairer to his people—fond though he was of the right side of the camera."

Her listeners gathered painfully that one of the foreigners had called her his little she-walrus, and the other his dumb sister, appealing for her support in the dispute. Later they had gone, and left her to despair over the wreck of Norden's furniture.

The room, windows all shut, was made unbearably hot by the absurd fire. Norden opened every window, but no breeze moved in the streets, waiting breathless for the end of an airless spring day. Dusk fled stealthily before the weary night. The woman, disappearing for a few minutes, came back with two candles which she placed on the chimney-piece.

"You'll take notice," she said tremulously, "that

they've broken the gas mantel, and it's too late to be getting a new one to-night."

Left alone again, the men looked at each other, divided between laughter and dismay. Norden sat down abruptly on the overturned couch. "Where the devil do you suppose they've gone?" he said. "Lord knows what trouble they'll get themselves into."

Brinton dragged a hassock to the corner farthest from the fire, and settled himself carefully. "I don't see," he answered, "that we need go to look for them. They will certainly come back to the charnel house."

He sought for his pipe and sat watching the others as they poked among the wreckage. The disorder was beyond amateur righting, and shortly they gave up the attempt and sat down, more or less uncomfortably, to wait for the wreckers.

Norden spoke abruptly. "I never realised before how significant it was that the greatest idealist of all times should have said 'I come not to bring peace among you but a sword.' This very evening an ideal has broken my vases, burned my books, and smashed my furniture."

Thurlow laughed. "You've been a long time finding out the Idealist," he said. "An ideal is the most destructive thing on earth: no one constructs but the materialist. The idealist comes along, sneers, storms, and breaks things down: the materialist, in despair, builds them up again—a little better perhaps. 'There,' he says, proudly, 'what do you think of

that ? ' Whereupon, our slave-driving idealist scoffs and prepares to undermine the work once more. And posterity, having its eyes set sideways in its head, praises the Idealist for the beautiful new building."

"According to that theory," said Denarbon, "the capitalist and the Catholic Church, the two greatest material powers on earth, must divide the sum of modern achievements between them."

Masson interrupted him angrily, and the two wrangled, until Masson, coming at last to a place where he could not argue, left argument to speak of his faith as of a perfect work of art, immutable, holding aloof from the strife of intellect, even from the justice of the impartial, fiercest demand, highest satisfaction. He spread it out for them over the world—a vast pattern woven of stars and blood, holding in its meshes man's greatest ideal, communal faith—and declared that all things fitted somewhere into it: until they saw Europe and the centuries through the dust and heat of Chelsea and the narrow room could not hold his thrice-crowned mistress.

But Denarbon, losing patience, accused the communal ideal as an infectious poison sending men to search stupidly in the desert for a mirage.

"All the same, you know," said Thurlow, "the *sense* of a communal life will be the soul of the future society, or else the whole will perish. I am sure of that. I am not thinking of the childish herding together of the old communists, but of a growing

sense of common responsibility—the idea of common service to the community. The Church of England and the scientists alone realise the ideal to-day. The one, linked to the State, serves to the best of its small ability the State's spiritual needs: the others, held together only by their common desire, serve the brain and heart of humanity. Look where you will through the world, it is everywhere torn by destructive jealousies: when they are great, we call them natural ambition or progress: when they are small we call them human weakness. It is all one: never a step forward was made through jealousy, but only innumerable pits dug for the maiming and delaying of the pioneers."

Denarbon interrupted him angrily. "What is the good of flourishing a word in our faces as if it were a thing with a soul or a sense? Community—communal—what do they mean? Here's a body for your word: the communal faith only gives a spiritual sanction to the suppression of the few real men by the crowd of mediocre half-men. Here's another body—your phrases are the wires of marionettes, only wanting a figure to dance in front of them—the spreading of a communal faith would mean that a few strong men, like enough our old scape-goats, the plutocrats, would tyrannise over the crowd under the pretence of serving the community. Shall I give you any more bodies, or have you had enough?"

"Quite enough." Thurlow laughed at him. "Your mind is a perfect Morgue. But, you know, I didn't

mean any of those things. I'm afraid I was thinking of a spirit and not of a body, a rash thing to do, no doubt. This is what I think. So far, the ideal of common service has been held, or apparently held, by separate bodies in the one society. Thus—the New Tories were to save the country by a mingled prudence and audacity, after the fashion of my lady dancing on the green at the feast she is giving to her tenants.” He broke off suddenly.

“By the way, where are the New Tories these days?”

“Thinking finely in corners,” said Norden.

“Then there were the Suffragettes, who were to reform politics—doubtless on the broth-without-any-bread-system for naughty children. And the Socialists, who should advance under the sign of Joseph’s coat. Each of these groups is going to reform all the others. Well, I suggest that there is no hope for us until the community moves to reform itself in full knowledge of its intentions. Let us leave out the aristocracy, which, in every crisis, leads admirably from the rear. I say that there is no hope for the working class until they demand with one voice, not toleration, but responsibility, not bread and circuses, but more service. They must demand the control of their own labours——”

“Syndicalist!” Denarbon’s voice, thin and toneless, came splitting the shadows that lay between him and the firelight.

“—the control of their own labours, so that they

may serve the community worthily. And this they will do, not as a state within a state, but in conjunction with the other classes whom they serve, and within proper safeguards, to be fixed by the whole community. Am I clear? I say also that there is no hope for the middle classes till they take control of their professions in somewhat the same way, and are prepared to serve with brains and hands, and to accept the full responsibility for their service to society. Do you see? Each is to serve, and be served; each body is to control its own affairs under the general control of each by all."

"Merciful heavens!" Denarbon hammered the arm of his seat. "What an orgy of pronouns. Each and all be damned. You sound like a Marxian manifesto."

"Are you just talking, or do you mean anything, Richard?" Brinton's amused voice seemed to soothe the angry sculptor. He was silent. Thurlow shifted restlessly in his chair, but did not answer.

Darkness had come while they talked, and with it a sense of heaviness and constraint. Not a leaf stirred on the plane tree below the window. Within the room, the fire, burning itself slowly down, was still intolerably hot. Beyond the twin circles of the candle light the fantastic shadows crowded on each other's heels. Masson, sitting opposite Denarbon, peered at him curiously. The sculptor's contemptuous dismissal of his arguments had pricked him sharply: when Thurlow's voice stopped, he spoke.

“ And who has upheld your faith through the years ? Who but the Catholic Church ? From Pope through Benedictine and Dominican, through Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola, the torch of Truth has not dropped.”

Denarbon laughed. “ The sort of truth that your Popes have carried on was sculptured for you in the Renaissance when Guglielmo della Porta hewed in marble the naked figure of a Pope’s mistress and put it at the feet of Paul III upon his sepulchre—for an allegory of Truth.”

“ Truth,” said Brinton idly, “ has ever been the mistress of the Church and the taskmaster of all other men.”

Masson flushed : he leaned towards Denarbon : his voice shook, but he chose his words.

“ One would hardly expect you to be a communist,” he said, “ you must have such an abiding dislike of its more fantastic forms. Plato was in some sort a communist, wasn’t he ?—and he would have women a common possession. You must find such a thought very galling.”

The other men stared at him. His words seemed to them wantonly unpleasant.

Denarbon stood up. “ I don’t know what you mean,” he said, “ but I suppose you mean something, and I believe it is intended as a taunt.”

Masson laughed : his fingers twitched in a nervous excitement. “ No one would care to share his woman.”

Denarbon wondered stupidly whether he were a mining engineer from South Africa. The next moment,

he had struck Masson across the mouth and the two were swaying backwards and forwards in the disordered room, while the others watched in an indifferent silence, as men watch a stupid play.

They fought in the darkness with fumbling, desperate blows.

And without warning the Czech poet and the Pan-Russian politician stood in the doorway. Arm in arm they stood, and smiled kindly round the room. The wrestling figures seemed to please them. "Beautiful, my friend," the Czech said, closing the door gently, "observe the rhythmic motion, the effortless power."

The rest stared at them while they picked their way across the room to admire the struggle from another angle. They became excited: flinging up his arms the poet stepped heavily on a fragile bracket fallen from the wall. It broke sharply, and the sound arrested the two who fought. Their hands dropped suddenly to their sides: they looked at each other, straining eyes in the darkness. Denarbon's arm moved helplessly behind him, groping for his chair. He found it and sat down. Masson stood still, looking up and down the room. Then he turned and went, hesitating, with outstretched hands. They heard him fumbling at the front door.

Denarbon spoke awkwardly. "I am very sorry," he said, "I owe you an apology, Norden—brawling in your room. . . ."

"Oh, never mind." Norden's cheerful voice startled

even himself. "My dear man," he waved a vague hand, "a little thing like that. . . ."

Not without difficulty the Czech and the Russian found seats : they ignored the state of the room and listened gravely while Norden warned them not to wander in London empty of pocket and too swift of speech.

"May God forgive you, my friend," the poet said, "for all the lies you have told us. You told us that in England all men spoke and none listened. Yet we have seen that six fools chattering on the grass draw men to listen, thick as dead leaves. True, the six who spoke were mad : it seemed that they said—You are starving and your women, yet it is a good government and must not be angered. You have worked and your fathers, for bread to stuff in your mouths : continue patiently and the good masters will perhaps give you butter. But do nothing hastily or rashly : we are in the secret and we know best."

Thurlow dragged his chair nearer the window. "What a damned lot of talking we do, all the same." He spoke bitterly. "I, indeed, have done nothing else all my life."

"The newer Universities," said Denarbon, "have bred a race of talkers."

The Russian interrupted him eagerly.

"It has nothing to do with the Universities," he said. "It is to do with the men who think. These men—the thinkers—were once powerful. They were priests and priest-kings. Slowly they have been ousted by men who think less but have greater cun-

ning. They have been persuaded that to think it is necessary to be idle and leave the ruling of the world to traders and money-hunters. So carefully has the illusion been spread that now to say that a man is a thinker is almost to say that he is a brain attached to a jelly-fish. Is it not clear? Do not they who write all over your great Shakespeare argue thus—‘Hamlet thought and therefore he could not act?’ And so the trap is closing on you. There is nothing more horribly clear to-day than the failure of the man who thinks. If he thinks truly he despairs—he folds his hands, and surveys his wings which become rapidly moth-eaten and mouldy. Or he talks and a few listen to him, a few already convinced. He and they heap abuse on all other men, and tell each other the truth about society, sitting in a futile circle, admiring each other’s bellies. In rare instances, he edits a journal which does not pay its way. Pah—my friends—behold him—the stinking intellectual—putrefying in public or private futility.”

He waved his arm, looming out of the shadows like a gross infuriated spider. “And again—our intellectual—he thinks so far and then he says—Of what use to be honest, to preach the truth I know? Better let me write articles in the best weeklies, or enter Parliament, that pen of talking sheep, or be secretary to a great man, and see through his cunning while I lick his footsteps. He becomes successful, he has dinner with publishers, he marries a high-born, he

grows fat, he dies, he is buried under a long paragraph in the City editions, the worms refuse to eat him."

His voice rose to a reedy scream. "It is your own fault, you thinkers who know the truth. You are fools, you are tricked. . . . You were to lead men out of the caves: there you sit, still in your little cave, playing with shadows and making great plans while the cunning ruler closes the door of your trap on you and your stupider brothers. Look down the centuries and see what you have done, you wise men, you leaders of the folk. Millions of men live always on the edge of starvation, millions more trample on each other for the rags of respectability and a moderate success, a handful are too rich to know that they are rich. And you all—philosophers, thinkers, men of soul and brain—you have let it come—you fools, you garrulous fools—bats and owls, chattering in caves."

He huddled back fiercely into his corner, drawing short gasping breaths.

"So that at the end of all the ages," Carey spoke idly, "man still sits thinking—in a little hole."

"And talking."

"The beasts talk."

"But not in a trap."

On the hearth the smouldering coals fell inwards and a flame lit up the face of the Greater Russian. He sat sucking in his cheeks and stroking the thick reddish down on his neck. The indifferent tones of the speakers irritated him afresh, and he turned on his host.

"You also," he stammered angrily, "you also—you travel Europe, preaching of will and power—talking to-day here, to-morrow there—why—why?"

Norden's laugh sounded careless. "I? I have itching soles to my feet. Perhaps they've been scorched."

The Russian stared at him, his irritation rising. Norden hesitated and went on. "You know—I don't belong to your class: I was never at a University. My father was an American-Swedish miner in Colorado: during a miner's strike he was roasted alive in a tent soaked with kerosene and set ablaze by the militia. There were women and children in it. Another woman—his wife—stood on the edge of a little wood and saw it all, and heard the screaming. She was near giving birth: the soldiers fired at her and she turned back into the wood."

The Russian's frustrated anger found an outlet. He cursed at soldiery the world over, and demanded to be told what vengeance Norden had taken on his father's murderers.

"Vengeance?" Norden laughed again. "Unfortunately, I was born just five hours too late to witness the incident."

The little poet looked up and nodded his head. He had not been listening for some time past. "That was unfortunate," he said gravely, with a vague sense of Norden's last words.

His voice wandered on, gentle and soothing. "I have

been wondering where we talked last—possibly in an Italian palace—and before then round a tribe-fire. It is certain that everything recurs—men and sounds and ideas, all alike. Nothing dies suddenly or grows suddenly. So that a song made in Rome two thousand years ago may be still lingering on earth, unwilling to die. That is why we should treat with respect the blind bedraggled flute-player in a dirty street. Yesterday, crowned with ivy, he led a crowd of men and maidens to the grove of the god. To-morrow he will be a poem to fire a world. So with thoughts. Because of the hate you feel to-day, men shall tear at each other's throats a century hence. The love you will to-day shall to-morrow encircle the world."

He paused and then added breathlessly, "This continuity of impressions is borne solely by men. Women carry on the race—a necessary service. Hence they cannot serve thought and spirit."

It neared midnight as the four men walked slowly away from Norden's rooms. A breeze came light-winged off the river. They stood for a moment watching the grotesque shadows on the blind just drawn in his room. The little poet had flung his arm round Norden, who stood stiffly to receive the embrace.

At the end of the street, Denarbon stopped short. "It's just struck me," said he, "that the little fiend might have been strangling him."

CHAPTER II

THURLOW tried vainly to entice Denarbon into sharing his rooms. "I can't pay my share," Denarbon said, "and I'm not going to trade on my friends. "You're a fool," Thurlow said violently, and left him.

Ashamed of his anger, he tried to help the other man by indirect ways. He took him to Elsa Carey's salon. Elsa smiled upon him and talked of classic art. "I am a Hellene," she said. "I worship frank, sensuous Nature. I could stand for hours before the adorable Faun in the Roman gallery of the Museum."

Outside the house, Denarbon turned wrathfully upon his friend. "Do you mean to say," he said, "that you waste your time listening to that—that clotted nonsense? Artists! Good God, those aren't artists. They're monkeys, imitating artists. I'll tell you what's the matter with you," he added viciously. "You've got among the wrong sort of people. Pompous intellectuals, and such. Lord knows where they come from. Scum of the middle classes, I suppose. There's something wrong with you, Richard, or you'd not tolerate 'em for a moment. What's wrong with them is that they've got no—no guts. A thundering

good war might shake 'em up. Winnow 'em. I don't know. But for pity's sake don't ask me to meet them again."

He went back to his studio and worked through the night to five of the morning at a series of sketches. The night before had been spent in the same way. His eyes were red-rimmed for want of sleep, and he staggered a little in sheer exhaustion as he crossed the room to draw back the curtains. He shivered in the chill half-light, and poked at the dying fire. His head ached and his senses played him tricks. The walls of the room reeled, swept back: he stood behind the pillars of a temple, peering through the shattered roof, and through the spaces in the walls. An outer court was paved with cobblestones and filled with scattered mounds of clay and rotting leaves. He stumbled over like heaps of filth on the mosaic of the temple itself, and they were full of small animals that chattered and scurried—dirty little beasts with monstrous heads. He strained his eyes in the grey light . . . desperately, for the firelit studio was coming back: it hung before him, confused and shadowy like a painting through whose sombre colours gleam the dim forms of an earlier picture. He caught a detached vision of the studio, perched like a turret over the roofs of the city. He was outside, looking at it: he was inside, bending over the fire. And there, dimly, were still the small animals—dirty little beasts, wagging enormous heads, chattering and scurrying.

With an effort he straightened himself, and set about making tea. When it was made he could not drink it, but went and walked about the Heath until the sun rose.

Late in the afternoon of the same day, he rang the bell of a second floor flat in Hampstead. The door was opened by a small harassed girl: she worked on the first floor in the morning, on the second in the afternoon, and at night slept with a mother and two sisters in a Lambeth tenement. She greeted Denarbon cheerfully.

“ Miss Chater in ? ”

“ Yes, sir—been in all day, sir—bleaching her hands.”

Denarbon closed the door of the sitting-room behind him. Then he walked swiftly towards the girl who was reading, curled up on the cushions of a low couch. He stopped and laid his cheek against her soft hair: she put an arm round his neck and pulled him down beside her.

“ I didn’t know you were coming, Henry.”

“ I didn’t know myself, Julie. But I couldn’t work: I was restless and I wanted to see you.”

He wondered for a moment whether he should tell her of his desperate poverty. But it seemed wanton to bring pain and weariness into this room, beside her radiant youth. He kept silence, stroking her hair, and admiring her hands. They were perfectly formed and she used them well. The dusky warm skin of

her neck and bosom attracted him subtly and strongly. He kissed the faint hollow at the base of her throat, very tenderly.

Julie Chater wished impatiently that he were not so gentle. She thought that he might almost as well have been in South Africa. Resting her head on his shoulder, she made a whimsical grimace of self-pity : he was very stupid, but altogether delightfully youthful. The immovable barrier of his respect for her could not be stormed ; she did not quite know how it might be crossed in such a way that the first step should seem to be her lover's.

“ Julie.” Denarbon put an old question. “ Julie, aren't you getting very tired of waiting for me ? ”

For answer she smiled and pulled him close to her. She thought tenderly of his absurdity. Marriage ! She did not think that she would marry for a long time. Why should she ? Her brother was very indulgent : he did not watch her as a husband would. He was never in before midnight : and he never questioned her movements. She was very comfortable ; and why take on the responsibility of an orchard when you may reach the fruit from outside the wall ? Moreover she was sure that she did not want to marry Henry Denarbon : he was exacting, and sometimes irritable. At the same time she had no intention of wasting her time in a long unprofitable engagement. But Henry was so absurdly careful not to startle her by a too passionate embrace. She had

felt his self-restraint, and laughed silently while it annoyed her.

He wearied her : but she admired him profoundly. Her brother and his friends thought so much of his work. It was harsh, they said, but almost quivering with life. She had looked long at the straining muscles of the athlete he was modelling. They seemed to her a little violent, but she praised the figure when her brother pointed out the sense of restrained power in the struggling limbs. He might succeed : it was possible, she thought, though it seemed very far-off and doubtful. For he worked so impatiently, leaving a thing unfinished for a mere whim, and letting the cloths dry on it until it was spoilt and wasted. Moreover, the harshness of his figures was creeping into the drawings and illustrations that he did for the magazines. Editors did not take them readily. She supposed that he had a little money of his own, or else he could hardly live.

She became conscious that he was leaning heavily against her. She sat up cautiously : he was asleep. His head, with its soft untidy hair, was hanging wearily forward : he leaned sideways against the back of the couch. For a moment, surprised and annoyed, she was tempted to wake him. Then for the first time since he came she noticed the pallor and exhaustion of his face. She pulled him gently down along the couch and put a cushion under his head. Then she crouched beside him on a footstool. His

face looked thin in the firelight. As she watched, her eyes were very gentle ; she slipped an arm under his head and laying her face against his, murmured incoherent phrases of tenderness and pity.

He slept for a long time ; when he awoke the clock on the mantel-shelf was striking nine. There was no light in the room but the leaping fire. Julie was sitting on the floor beside the couch, her face turned from him. She had taken down her hair and was brushing it softly. The warm light shone across it and deepened the shadows beneath her throat. Her dress was open above her breast and one slipperless foot rested against the fender. He lay still for a moment, looking at her through eyes still heavy with sleep. His brain reeled slightly : she was adorable, and—intimate—like his dreams. He stretched out a hand and caught her shoulder. She turned round, smiling, and bent over him.

“ Awake ? ” she said softly.

“ Julie—sweetheart—wife. . . . ”

He closed his eyes, dazed, and afraid to think.

She slipped down on the couch, and putting both arms round him, pressed her body against his.

He shivered, and kissed her with a passion that seemed half an unaccountable anguish. . . .

It was nearing midnight. He knelt beside her bed, and buried his face in the pillow. She looked so youthful and helpless in the dim light. He groaned in an agony of self-reproach : he was to blame—she

had been overborne by his desire. How could she forgive him ?

Julie's hand touched his head. " You must really go now, Henry. My brother will be in soon. . . . I love you more than anything on earth. . . . "

" Julie." He caught the hand and held it. " You won't hate yourself—and me—to-morrow ? "

She winced. Her lips curled a little : the thought passed through her mind—" George Masson would not have made that mistake."

" Why should I ? " she answered softly. " I love you. Good night, dear heart."

A few minutes after he had gone, she was sleeping happily, with a smile on her lips.

CHAPTER III

ATHENAIS, writing from London, to her father in Whitby—. . . “ I expected so much from my two years here and the disappointment is by so much the greater. At first, I had to work so hard that I didn’t have time to think. Then, it seemed as if I were on the very heels of great things. The men and women I worked against had all an air of purpose and self-confidence, as if an understanding of Banking and Currency were a thing so indisputably more worth having than—say—a knowledge of imaginary Indo-Germanic roots or the ability to read Anglo-Saxon uneasily. I worked : I worked till my brain was like a rusty engine : I planned a corrected Marx. Then when I stopped to rest the little devils of sanity walked easily past my poor defences. They jeered at my terrible efforts : they laughed from Ealing to Stratford-atte-Bowe over my note-books of figures and values : and they turned my earnestness inside out like a shabby glove—finger tips gone. What I suffered from them, and what a wretched dull-eyed slave crept back to the galley ! . . .

“ The really hopeless thing about students is their fetish worship of professors and lecturers. What they

are taught in a series of lectures by the great man *is* so, because they have learned it so—that wages represent a fair percentage of profit, that human labour is a commodity like mechanical labour, that rent and interest are the shoulders of the god—and so on for always and always—this is the best of all possible worlds, *given a few easily-organised changes and a little gentle tidying-up of chance muddles*. . . . I could write a credo for students of the School of Economics. ‘I believe in all the official economists and even (with reserve) in Sidney Webb : in the fundamental permanence of the social system as arranged by these authorities : and in the necessity for keeping up economic appearances in the face of all awkward happenings in real life. I believe that statistics are the skeleton of society and sound theories the flesh and blood, that humanity is as the economic theory of the best authorities, and not what its actual speech and deed would suggest : that having worked through my syllabus I am now in possession of all the known facts about life.’

“ Poor dear, how you are yawning over this letter !

“ Indeed, I am tired. Yesterday was the last day of the finals. I think I have done well, but I am not so sure of it as I was after the English degree exams. I tried to find a middle way between authority and inspiration (this is a joke, dear) but oh, I am tired, and it is hot. I would like to lie face downwards, in a meadow where the grass is white with the big mar-

guerites—a little stream in the valley at the bottom of the field, a place of green cool shadow, and far up the valley, the moors, weaving lazily their purple cloke. . . . Two—nearly three years gone, and nothing done—a little learned, a lot unlearned and thrown aside. Athenais Garain, you make me tired with your whining. . . . But indeed, now that my student days are over I don't know what to do. I have thrown over Mrs. Destin's offer, and half pledged myself to a crew of motley revolutionaries—in whom my trust fails as I approach them. . . .”

The girl laid down her pen and walked across to the window. She was still staring into the street when Henry Denarbon came round the corner, and a moment later into the room, a dusty disreputable figure—that dropped wearily into the nearest chair.

“Are you going anywhere this afternoon, Thea?”

“No,” she told him. “And I am very glad you've come. What do you want me to do?”

“I want you to come and see Hartley, the man who edits the “Pioneer”: I told him you had promised to work for him, and that you were a School of Economics man.”

“Well—and what did he say?”

“He pulled an awful face and asked me what the devil I meant by bringing him a sucking dove from that cote to fluff its wings in his blasted office.”

Athenais grinned. “Well?” she said.

“I reassured him, and he will be glad to see you—

and the sooner the better. Although the "Pioneer" only comes out once a week it takes a damn lot of getting out, and Hartley is the only man who can give all his time to it. The other fellows can't do anything until the evening—except the man from a certain Tory daily—no names—who does the 'Political Muddlers' column, and he comes in every day as soon as he can get away. A good deal of Hartley's time is wasted seeing the paper's creditors, and explaining to them that as it barely supports him, it can't be expected to support them. . . . The 'Pioneer' has the last legs of a centipede. . . . You'll like Hartley, I think. He's the son of a Welsh farmer—a bit unfinished, but I don't know that that's a drawback."

The "Pioneer" had two rooms at the top of a big publishing house near Blackfriars Bridge. They were small and hot: when the political leader writer was using the typewriter in one of them, Hartley cursed and took his papers to the nearest coffee house: when Hartley was embroiled with creditors, the leader writer went home to dine.

Denarbon and Athenais found the editor alone and idle. He was short, sallow of face, dark-haired and round-headed. His eyes were disconcerting: they were dark and round: and one of them was set lower and much further from his nose than its fellow. It appeared to be looking over his shoulder: unwary creditors found their wrathful speech trailing into incoherence while they tried to catch up with its

glance before it should slip round the corner of his head. Aware of the effect, though not of the cause, Hartley was unduly proud of his power to bewilder an opponent. He attributed it to the unusual brightness of his eyes, and often compared them with the portrait of Charles Bradlaugh and a coloured presentment of the youthful Napoleon, both hanging over his desk. He had few other delusions: his intellect, not too wide of range, was extraordinarily clear; and his writings as clear and impressive as his thought.

He gave Athenais and Denarbon the only chairs in the room, and himself sat on the broad window-sill, after carefully lifting down an over-fed cat. Athenais, forewarned, resisted the wandering eye and told him briefly what she thought she could do. She did not ask whether her help were wanted, aware after a first glance that Hartley would not hesitate to turn her away if he doubted her. It appeared that he had no doubts.

"I suppose," he said cheerfully, "that you know we can't pay you anything. We average one financial crisis a week. The only creature the 'Pioneer' supports is that silly cat—and to a small extent—the editor, whose soul it keeps within hailing distance of his body. So, I shouldn't expect you to come here any oftener than you liked—and provided that you do what you set out to do and don't turn up two days late without your copy, or play other fool tricks peculiar to the amateur, I don't care when and how

you come and go. I'd like you to turn up here once a day—but I wouldn't hold you to that."

He felt in a drawer of the desk and found three large yellow apples. These he set himself to peel and eat, flicking the pips at the cat. Between mouthfuls he gave the girl what he called the general rules of the road.

"This, you know," he said, "is not a Tory high-stepper, nor a Liberal Daniel-come-to-judgment. It's a rebel, Miss Garain—a pirate—if necessary, a muck-raker. It specialises in abuse—not the ordinary abuse by implication of your gentlemanly leader writer. You write now and then like this—'these damned hypocrites in the Labour Party who slaver over our votes and betray us for ha'pennies.' Introduce the milder curses of everyday life into a political leader and the effect is out of all proportion to the trouble taken. Everyone is pleased with you: you get a reputation for amazing honesty—and all for nothing."

He paused, and began on the third apple.

"Don't think I'm teaching you to be a mere effect-grubber. But there are certain appearances to be kept up—even in this troubled well of truth." He began to speak slowly, stopping after each sentence. "Curse everybody: suspect everybody whose income is over five hundred a year. *But*, there are two bodies of people who are not to be offended. First—the Church. Second—the women. And the latter are more important than the former."

Athenais succeeded in putting a sharp question.

He slipped down from the window-sill and stood leaning against the empty fireplace, marking his words with a peculiar gesture of two fingers.

“You don’t offend the Church because it has already done the working man all the harm it can, and to offend it now is merely to stir up foul odours. You don’t offend the women because you can’t afford to. Where do you think the ‘Pioneer’ would be to-morrow if it didn’t have behind it a handful of well-to-do women in search of a hobby—something to take the place of a cat—able to indulge a yearning love for humanity, and pay—my dear girl—pay? Who pays the deficit on this paper when it gets beyond the recognised limit? The women, of course. Where do I go when I want money for a little local strike, perishing for want of funds? To the other working men? My sense of decency won’t let me be that sort of pilferer. I go to the women again, and in come their half-crowns and half-sovereigns. And what do I pay for the right to tap this little mine? Nothing more than frequent articles on the divorce laws and interviews with Mrs. Frederick Ponsonby at her home for rescued girls or her kitchen for free soups to the perishing. Oh, its cheap—it’s damned cheap.”

He smiled a little bitterly, drawing down the corners of his mouth.

“I think,” said Athenais slowly, “that I could manage to keep off their prejudices and still write honestly.”

"Probably you can, Miss Garain, probably you can."

The smile vanished, and he searched among the papers on his desk.

"Now then," he went on, "before you do anything else, there's a little strike in Dublin—rotten wages, rotten houses, rotten system. Lash it up. Get us facts—as many facts as you like. Here is an episode that you can make into a short and strong article. One of the women workers is in the habit of leaving her small child—four years old—locked in her one room all day while she goes to the mill. All the other folk in the tenement work in the mills. One day last week the child caught fire and burned to death behind that locked door before the two old women left in the building could get help to break it down. Here's a letter with the full story. Write it up—and demand that crèches are established for the children of working women——"

Athenais interrupted him. "Why crèches? It seems a jolly sight clearer that if wages were better the women wouldn't have to go out to work, but could stay at home and look after their children."

Hartley smiled on her. "My youthful innocent," he said, "you are wandering already. In the first place, there are multitudes of fools in the world who will lavish time and money on establishing crèches where there isn't one wise man who will do spade-work for better wages. And in the second place—what would become of the sacred independence of the

female soul if you didn't let it go to mills and factories ? ”

He was interrupted by a babble of feminine voices in the passage outside. On his shouted command half a dozen girls came into the room, filling it completely. They greeted the editor and Denarbon, and stared frankly at Athenais. The leader of the group was a tall dark girl with a broad smile in painful contrast to her peaked face and underfed body.

“ Here we are again, Mr. Hartley,” she said cheerfully, “ come for our bits of unearned increment—and no nearer earning 'em than we were last week.”

From a bag in a pigeon-hole of his desk Hartley paid out varying small sums to each of the girls, and a larger amount to the leader.

“ To be given out as usual,” he said. She handed back half-a-crown. “ Maud Wells has gone back,” she said. “ Couldn't stick it any longer, so there's her little lot.”

He shrugged his shoulders, and under cover of the incessant chatter, gave Athenais a rapid explanation. “ Artificial flower makers—wages cut down beyond even their endurance. So they came out, about twenty of them, from one floor—starved for a week and then came here. I appealed for money, got a little, and dribble it out every week. Three-and-six to those in lodgings, and half-a-crown to those at home.”

“ Three-and-six ? ” Athenais stared.

“ Two or three join in a room, and so manage to

exist. But it can't go on. And I see no help for them but going back. Their places in that particular factory are already filled, of course."

Athenais turned hesitatingly to the girl beside her. "What will you do," she said, "if you can't get back?"

"Do?" The girl answered abruptly. "Do something else, I suppose."

"Domestic service?" Athenais persisted.

The girl laughed. "Not for me," she said, "not blasted well for me. At it all day, one night off a week, and then in by ten—never get your nose out of doors all day except into the back yard. I've tried it."

They trooped noisily from the room and a few minutes later Athenais and Denarbon followed them. At the foot of Ludgate Hill they stopped, undecided.

"A theatre?" Denarbon asked. "G.K.C. at the "Little"—Shaw at the Kingsway?"

She shook her head.

"I haven't any money just now."

"I might," he spoke doubtfully, "I might have enough for both."

"You haven't," Athenais assured him, "and if you had, you wouldn't persuade me to spend your money in taking me to the theatre."

He searched in a neglected pocket, and found sixpence. "I didn't know that was there," he said, and spun it clumsily, failing to catch it. It rolled along the ground, and disappeared down the nearest grate.

"The treacherous beast!" he cried.

Athenais laughed. "We'll go and drink coffee where they give you it in glasses. My money won't last until Monday—quarter-day—in any case, so a little less won't matter."

Dusk was pouring gently through the little streets and squares when they made a slow way to one of the comfortless little cafés of Soho. The chairs were of a vile hardness and only a thin curtain separated them from the outer room where a crew of displeasing Italians cursed and gabbled over their cards. Denarbon lit his pipe. Athenais watched the blue smoke curling up the walls and slipping out of the narrow window set high over their heads. It made strange, thin patterns in the close stillness, and they drew her, submissive, beyond the blotched houses, beyond your bat-eyed, soulless, flat-faced Southern fields, to the shadow of great rocks. Below, in narrow gorges, the sea rushed and eddied with a hollow, sucking sound; beyond her, the myriad-shaded darkness went forth to the edge of the world; behind, rose the black cathedral of the cliffs. With an effort she fled back into the narrow room; the vast silence drew down into four walls; the thin crest of distant waves shrank, still and stiff, into the silver rims round their tall glasses of coffee.

They were both tired: the place was very hot, and silence fell often on their fragmentary speech. They talked indifferently, but when they reached old battle-fields their voices lifted and quickened.

"What do you think they were discussing in committee when I was at Mrs. Destin's house last week?"

"Spiritual independence of cows."

"Nothing so harmless. A scheme for a five pound bonus to be given to poor workers—provided that they were well supervised before and after the birth of the child. See the idea? Eugenic babies, brought into the world under the kindly direction of Margaret's efficient friends. All privacy gone—swept into the limbo of inefficiency. I think, perhaps, that all these childless females wanted a sort of maternity by proxy—or it might be just an itch to interfere. . . . What next? Eugenic husbands, I should think—chosen by the National Committee for their points."

She was silent. Denarbon stared unconsciously at her flushed cheeks, and drank his coffee, while the shadows came thicker and faster upon them, and the Italians paid their reckoning and went noisily. After a while, a little oil lamp was brought in, and more coffee. Athenais dragged her chair into the yellow circle of light and rested her elbows on the table.

"The whole thing," she said idly, "might turn on the mental difference between men and women. Men are content to plan big things and see them well started. Women want to do things and at once—to see them finished. . . . Large ideas savour to them of incompleteness, perhaps of inability—untidiness. . . .

They—I mean the intellectual women who work in the world—have neater minds than men—smaller and neater. . . .”

Denarbon had been staring moodily at the lamp, and now interrupted violently.

“ Why can’t you leave them alone ? Maybe they’ll never be really dangerous, because there won’t be enough male feminists, traitors, panders, what you will—to secure them their suicidal ambitions. And as for their vaunted progress, where is it ? Because five hundred women are half educated now, where a hundred years ago, five were highly cultured, are they to be allowed to make any sort of fools of themselves and lay hands on all that men—men, mind you—have fought for in society ? How much do you suppose the feminine blackleg thinks about making society more tolerable for men and other women ? Devil a bit—all she’s concerned about is her cursed independence and to get married as soon as possible. And the brainy woman ? Have you ever known one who was more than efficient, more than merely capable in the examination sense ? Imagination—intellectual confidence—they haven’t any. Unless by imagination you mean a belief in faeries—the spook writers would call them ‘elementals’—and a liking for W. B. Yeats ; and by confidence, you mean self-conceit. They’ve got eyes to see, haven’t they, and ears to hear the word of the future ? Then if they are fit to take their share in making a new society, they’ll fall into line.

Some of them have. If not, they'll be outpaced, as they've been before."

"It's all very well," the girl's voice hardened, "but I know that there is something wrong when thousands of women toil in little houses, in ill-equipped kitchens, at work that in co-operation could be done in a quarter the time, and done pleasantly. And when the only alternative to offices and factories is life in a suburban rabbit-hutch—baking, cleaning, washing, nursing the child, and waiting for the man to come in and be fed. It isn't enough just to shout at women to get back to their kitchens—it's not enough—oh, not anywhere near enough."

She reflected with drawn brows.

"Some sort of sane co-operation would be better. A big house with a scientific kitchen; where women could do the work in shifts and save the awful endlessness of house work. A nursery where the only child could play with others. It could be done. Anything would be better than living where the sitting-room door opens on the kitchen, and the dinner seems to be cooking in every corner of the house. Miles and miles of sordid respectability."

Denarbon grinned at her.

"What about the sacred privacy of home life, my girl?"

"Privacy of home! There's a lot of privacy, isn't there, in the houses where you can hear your neighbour sneeze, and count the holes in his shirts as they dry in the back garden."

"Thea—you're . . ."

"Vulgar? I'm *shocked*!"

She laughed, but was serious again instantly. "Goodness knows how I loathe—for differing reasons—both the Elsa Carey female and the Efficiency Hag—but you've got to see, and I've got to see that not only have they wrought such spiritual changes that the mental outlook of women—and of men on women—will never be the same again, but that they're not alone in making and clamouring for change. Behind them are the thousands—the hundreds of thousands of women—some in suffrage and socialist societies, some not out of college, and some—like me—just females at large, who can never get back into kitchens, never be satisfied again with the four walls of Nook Rise and Fairview."

"Anything more entrancing in the four walls of a business office or a factory? . . ."

"Of course there isn't. But, my dear Henry, you don't *live* in the office and the factory. At the end of working hours you go through the door and—outside—you're free of them, you've a body and a mind to give to something else—if you've any energy left. Under present conditions you have no energy left—but do you want present conditions to be future and permanent ones? You *never* get free of the drudgery of house work: there's no door but Ibsen-Nora's that lets you out of it. And you *never* have any energy left there: all your energy and all your mind are

split up into a hundred little bits and given, some to to-morrow's dinner, some to the rates, some to cooking, some to dusting. Don't tell me that house work needs an educated brain. Only the new sentimentalists believe that. Why on earth—when you are planning to free men from the pressure of modern competitive drudgery—shouldn't you plan to free women from the pressure of modern villa drudgery. You're not so silly as to think that if women once get their hands out of the greasy water and the cinder bucket, that they'll give up making homes and rearing children."

She stopped and dropped her vehemence shame-facedly. "You must see that you *can't* shove women back, no matter how you coax or abuse. You'll have to make your plans for a re-made society on the basis of feminine labour alongside masculine. After all—why not? . . . Allright, Henry, I've finished. To tell the truth, I'm not sure where I stand."

"It's quite nice," Denarbon remarked smoothly, "to find something that you're not sure about. . . ."

She sought in the pocket of her coat with the air of a person suddenly reminded of a subtle jest: her smile was malicious.

"Look what I've been saving for you."

She pushed a letter into his hands. "No—don't turn to the last page: the signature is immaterial. It's from a girl we both knew at college, asking me to an old students' dinner. Asking me rather coldly, I may remark. I was not altogether accepted at

college—outside my own circle. They thought I wasn't serious. . . . But read it—read the bit I've marked."

The sculptor read aloud. "I've been revelling in some of the lectures given here. I went to a course given to teachers about social problems, and in one of them a lady doctor gave us a very clear account of Venereal Diseases. It was a great privilege and a splendid lecture. There is also a splendid course . . ."

He threw the letter on the table.

"What the devil—Thea—take it away. I don't want to read it. What a mind, what a female—venereal disease—oh, Lord, what a privilege. . . ."

"I think," said Athenais, "that she's in the transition stage. A lecture on such things is still a delirious adventure. Such things were not spoken of once—now, a certain kind of woman insists on shouting about them. Anyway, it's rather funny—the state of mind, I mean."

Later in the evening they stood for a moment in Trafalgar Square. Denarbon would have liked to speak to her of Thurlow. He knew that she was suffering: her face was thinner, her serenity a cracked mirror. But he knew also that she would not forgive his insight; he held his tongue and they went their separate ways. Athenais walked quickly to the house in Buckingham Gate, sure of finding there the latest news of the Dublin strike. She had been writing in Margaret's committee room for half an hour when

Robert Destin came in. Her work almost over, she was glad to see him. During the past few months she had slipped, indifferently enough, into a frail friendship with Margaret's husband. He talked to her, and his talk was amazingly good: he knew Italy well—the Italy of the Renaissance—and he re-made it for her eyes in its glory of colour and light: for her, artist and sculptor, sensual priest and hooded ascetic trod again its cities; Lorenzo the Magnificent wrought her a masque, Polizziano recaught his golden song. Athenais listened readily as long as he would talk: with that, he was so far content. He had lived too long to override the hounds and spoil the hunt. Moreover, he was interested beyond his wont, and sacrificed with hardly a sigh, a long planned visit to Greece. At times, he felt something faintly ridiculous in his pursuit of a girl so openly devoted to his wife: but he was cynic enough to believe that devotion to the wife and love of the husband were not uncommonly found in company. None the less, he trod warily: Margaret, unusually absorbed in her work, hardly noticed that he was still in England.

He leaned against the table, looking down at the scattered papers.

“Notes on Dublin strike,” he read. Then——

“Why do you do all this? Is it because you like it, or just to be in things?”

“I don't know that I like it, but I want to do it.”

“A statement beyond my understanding.”

He picked up a book that Athenais had used to keep down her papers. It was a copy of a modern novel, its title pretentious enough, its theme already torn to rags in a welter of criticism, abusive and approving. He turned over the leaves.

“What do you think of it, Miss Garain?”

“Not much.”

His surprise was only half assumed.

“But I thought that all modern women—all the clever ones, at least—asked nothing better than liberty to live their own lives.”

“A silly phrase.” She spoke shortly. “And more especially so when it is only the new novelist’s stupider way of saying ‘all for love and the world well lost.’ It doesn’t mean much more in this very book, does it? Rather stupid wife, clever and ambitious husband, exceptionally intelligent and helpful mistress. Struggle between ambitions and mistress—victory of the mistress—one more ruined statesman, one more psychological novel.”

“But,” he interrupted her, “you don’t see. The folly and pity of it is that the man had to ruin his career or sacrifice his love, and the last was at least as important and noble a part of him as the first.” He sat down in a chair beside her, and fixed his eyes on her face. “Besides—it’s all wrong. Not only the divorce system, but the very marriage laws themselves. Why should freedom be made impossible to men and women? Why must a wife, in giving her

husband love and friendship, give him also the monopoly for life over her body and her actions ? ”

The girl's eyes held a faint distaste.

“ I am not really interested in the problems of the feminist. But to me there is something—spiritually indecent—about the upper middle class women who live on their husband's money, and clamour to live their own lives, by which they mean most often the right to do anything or nothing as it pleases them—and sometimes, the right to random loves. These women, cultured and refined as they may be, are after all slaves, because they are fit for nothing else. They have to be kept in their leisured independence by a man's labour. If they enjoy freedom they do so because a man is content to buy it for them, while asking nothing in return for his money. They are doled out their spurious freedom, maintained in it, and re-endowed with it every moment of their being. They couldn't pay the cost of it for themselves! Half the women who work in the limelight for social progress are able to do so because their husbands work in a business house.”

She paused, and he did not answer, watching her through half-closed eyes. A cold breeze coming through the open window, scattered her papers. She shivered a little, and began to put them together. With an unexpected movement he put his hand over hers and leaned towards her. The light from the reading lamp fell on his face, grave and curiously anxious.

How much of what you say do you believe ? ”

“ I don't know,” she told him ; her voice was indifferent.

“ You are very young and your thoughts are older than mine. I will give you a new thought, older than the dead gods, younger than to-day's tears. I love you, Athenais, and I want you. I love your eyes and your hair, and the movement of your hands. Thea, Thea. . . .” A memory pricked him. “ It's not just clutching desire. I want you body and soul and mind, the quick leap of your mind to mine, the shining spirit in your eyes. . . .”

Athenais had not stirred since he began ; her hands, still full of papers, lay quiet under his. Now she looked up : he thought that she smiled.

“ My mind doesn't leap to yours,” she said. Her glance turned to the open novel. “ I believe you got that out of the book.” •

He met her swiftly. “ If I did, it is because I read you into it, your daring mind and your adorable youth.”

She felt only the cold excitement of the debating society : followed a desire to exploit the possibilities of the argument, faint amusement : then a sudden shame swept into her speech. She smiled at him frankly. “ Your new thought savours too much of your new novel—and I do not like either of them. They are artistic blunders.”

Robert Destin was too old to push failure into open

defeat. He caught up her words without apparent effort, and made indifferent reply. The sound of the opening door rounded off an unfinished sentence. A girl, hesitating on the threshold, looked from one to the other.

"I am sorry to disturb you," she said. "Mrs. Destin sent me here ; she is coming herself. I am to take some Italian letters home to translate."

Athenais had met Julie Chater several times when Julie came with an artist brother to Elsa Carey's routs. Destin thought that he must have seen her before : he remembered a passing glimpse of the dark vivid face.

As Margaret entered she caught his appraising glance, and for a brief moment, shuddering, looked between the eyelids of the past.

CHAPTER IV

TOWARDS the end of September Athenais carried a message from Margaret to Elsa Carey. The maid who opened the door said that Mrs. Carey was in the study and expecting her. Athenais walked slowly upstairs, and on the first floor landing stopped abruptly. The door of the study was half open, and a thin, terrified whisper reached her. "Mother, I *will* be a decent girl, I won't paint in here again—mother. I will try to be a decent girl—only don't punish me." The whisper ended in a hurried sobbing. Athenais caught the sound of blows, and a woman's laboured breath. Then as she stood, a chair was suddenly flung down. The sobs became uncontrolled screams. Marthe, running out on to the landing, huddled down by the wall, her arm curved over her head. The woman who followed had Elsa Carey's face, red and swollen, distorted almost beyond recognition. She struck at the crouching child, her wild blows falling on head and shoulders and body. Athenais, sick and dazed, cried out, and Elsa turned and saw her.

"Don't." Athenais said stupidly. "You are killing her."

The woman answered breathlessly, "My daughter will learn to obey *me*, or suffer accordingly."

She struck again. Athenais, lost to all sense of respect for the decencies of English family life, caught at her arm. The grasp was effective : Elsa dropped the stick, and leaning against the wall, pressed both hands to her side.

“ Marthe, go to your room,” her breath came in gasps, “ get into bed and stop there ; these scenes are killing me, you will have killed me.”

Marthe went upstairs, stumbling and sobbing. Athenais thought that a maid picked her up at the top. She looked at the mother. Elsa's eyes were closed : her head with its disordered hair and flushed face was thrown back and her hands fumbled at her throat. Fear followed disgust in the girl's mind. Elsa's own maid had come slowly upstairs and Athenais turned to her : without a word the woman began to lead her mistress slowly across the landing. At the door of her bedroom Elsa turned her head and said weakly : “ Please don't go, Miss Garain.” The too faint voice reassured the girl : she stifled a senseless desire to laugh, and, walking into the study, sat down to wait.

The signs of Marthe's wickedness were spread over the table : a small box of water-colours, a sheet of writing in sprawling vivid letters and an overturned cup of water that had splashed over Elsa's manuscript and Elsa's dainty notebook. Athenais was touching them with pitiful fingers when the maid came into the room.

"Mrs. Carey will see you now," she said.

"Is she—all right?"

The woman's contempt was sudden and unconscious. She hesitated and then spoke quickly.

"All right? Yes—resting after her little excitement. Some folk are made that way. I've met her sort before: they enjoy it." She stood aside for Athenais to pass.

Elsa Carey lay in a chair before the fire. She wore only a thin night gown, and a long wrap as thin and precious. She was pale and exhausted, and hardly listened while Athenais delivered her message. Her hair hung over her shoulders in two plaits, and she twisted one of them nervously round her fingers, looking at the younger woman with wide-open, sorrowful eyes. Athenais was about to go, when the opening of the front door was followed by footsteps that came slowly and heavily up the stairs. They paused twice on the landing, and twice a door opened and shut.

Elsa sat swiftly upright: her cheeks flushed. She listened.

"That is Gilbert," she said, "he is looking for me—oh, I know he is looking for me." Then, in a low voice, "Please don't go, Miss Garain—please don't go."

Athenais looked at her, wondering. The footsteps hesitated outside the door.

"Are you there, Elsa—may I come in?"

"No—yes—no, certainly not."

Gilbert Carey opened the door and came in. He did not seem to notice the third person: profoundly uneasy, the girl made a hurried apology, and walked towards the door. Elsa's voice was sharp with entreaty.

"Please don't go."

Her husband did not look at Athenais.

"Do you really want Miss Garain to stay, Elsa?"

"Yes, of course—why not?" The woman's laugh ended abruptly, and her hand closed on the girl's arm. Gilbert Carey walked over to the window and for a moment stood there looking out. Then he turned and spoke gently.

"I find," he said, "that it is quite a matter of common gossip—among a certain set, at any rate—you—Kenneth Knowles."

"I don't understand."

Her scurrying thoughts eluded her: she came swiftly to one clamorous question. How much could be saved?

"Yes, you do." For the first time a shadow of anger crossed his eyes. It calmed her.

"Please explain," she said, standing stiffly before him.

He seemed to choose his words. "It doesn't matter who told me, but I—was told. I went to his studio and told him—that I knew."

"Well?"

The man's answer was careless. "Oh, he—that boy—he got red, lied, blustered quite a bit, and finally was very romantic, and spoke of you as a maimed goddess—in short, he told me what I knew already—that it was true."

It seemed to the woman that she stood, self-contained and cold, in a storm that mounted round her. The humming in her ears worried her. She lifted her head and looked at him.

"And you believed it—you dared to believe it?"

Her assurance suddenly maddened him. He came close and shook her by the shoulders.

"Why shouldn't I believe it? Wouldn't it be like you—you that have taken with both hands all these years, and sneered at my giving: you have cheated me so long, why not now—in this?"

He lost his head and shouted. At the same time, a terrible despair seized him: he saw himself impotent and ridiculous. "In a moment," he thought desperately, "I shall be talking like one of my own damned books."

Elsa's self-control was gone. She stared at her husband, and clung to Athenais with both hands. Scorn of the quiescent, courteous man she had married, fell before a swift admiration for the blustering bully. She thought herself shaken with a passion of adoration: her actions were almost spontaneous.

"Oh, it's not true," she said. "Gilbert—believe me—you must believe me—before that silly boy: he

was lying, he is romantic, he wanted to be thought wonderful. Gilbert—listen to me.” She crouched on the floor, and clung to his knees. He lifted her and pushed her from him : the trailing night gown caught round her legs : she swayed, clutched at the mantel shelf, and struck the side of her head against a bracket

Slowly, holding on to the back of a chair, she straightened herself. The cut over her right eye brow was not deep, but a little blood dropped on to her loosened night gown and her breast. She wiped at it, looking helplessly at them, and saying softly “ Oh, the blood, the blood—I am afraid.” Her face was that of a frightened child. Gilbert Carey seemed to move with an effort.

“ No, don’t go for anyone, Miss Garain ; if you would help me. . . .”

Between them, he and Athenais laid her on the bed : then they washed the cut and bound it up. Raising herself on one elbow, Elsa caught hold of him, weeping uncontrollably. “ It’s true—oh, forgive me. It is true. All they said. Gilbert, forgive me. I love you. Oh, I love you—no one else. I will love you always, if you will let me. I will make up for it.”

He soothed her, putting back the hair from her eyes, gently unclasping the clutching fingers. He did not doubt her present sincerity : nor her future inability to be sincere.

“ I love you, Gilbert.” The sight of her outstretched arms hurt him intolerably.

"I do not believe you," he said, and went from the room.

Athenais stayed a little while longer, until she thought that Elsa was quiet. Then she went also, treading softly, and let herself out at the front door.

Left alone, Elsa thought painfully over the catastrophe. At times she renewed her sobs, bewildered and helpless before her fallen house of cards, hardly able to understand that this at last was real, past her power to set right, beyond her quick invention and the subtle scheming that had served her all her life. After a while she lay quiet, murmuring half sentences below her breath. She was planning for the worst: almost involuntarily, her mind presented for her consideration phrases and gestures of the explanations she could give her world.

The dusty warmth of a September evening lay over the city when Athenais left the house. She was angry that she had been made a witness of the scene, and impatient of her anger and the trembling of her limbs. The thought of her room in the stifling air of Chelsea depressed her. She chose at random a west-going bus and rode for some time, careless where it took her.

It was almost dark when a wide common caught her glance. "All grass is green at night," she thought, and leaving the bus walked away over the burnt uneven ground. Shortly she reached a road: trees overhung high walls: at a corner a small pond blinked with its one eye at the faint stars. A signpost, having

nothing to say of lilacs, said only "To Kew," and she turned away to the right. The narrow lane was grey with dust : in the dark hedges no birds stirred. The branches trailed to her feet, and a dim fragrance ran to meet her. The remembrance of the unhappy thwarted man she had just left pricked her intolerably. Its effect on her thoughts was curious, but not uncommon. Short phrases, that were almost moans, broke from her, and she stumbled as she walked. "Richard, my dear, my dear, I would have cared for you better than that. I would have loved you, and rested you in my arms, and kept things from hurting you. Oh, Richard, Richard—I want you so." From Kew the river-path to Richmond is not long. There was no movement in the stark water, no sound from the squat barges : as she walked distaste and anger slipped from her : remained only pity and a sense of her sore need.

She was already in Sheen before physical weariness drove out the sharpness of her pain. On the top of the city-bound bus, her thoughts repeated themselves stupidly. "Oh, my dear, my dear, I want you so."

She opened impotent hands in the darkness.

Through the dark shadows of the trees and the patches of lighted streets they came out on to the common before Barnes. The road stretched away and lost itself in the shadow of sleeping houses. Beyond them, heavy clouds swept over the edge of the far hill. The sky between was a deep clear ame-

thyst, veiled and barred by the clouds that lay across the moon, and drew together in the shifting darkness of the zenith. Scattered lights beckoned across the distance: the trees were blacker shadows in the darkness. The wind, stirring her hair, bore in its train vague suggestion of dim stars. Athenais lifted her head. "After all—one lives." She spoke aloud, though no one heard her.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS the end of the year, Thurlow met Japhet Brebis on the steps of the British Museum. With a little difficulty the Professor of Philosophy remembered him and offered an invitation to lunch. They went to an Austrian café crowded with foreign business men from Holborn and Southampton Row : and for a while sat unnoticed behind the swinging doors. The little built-in couches were so high that Brebis could not reach the floor with his feet, and he bounced uncomfortably on the velvet cushions. "Now," he said, "young man, what have you done since you left your guiding ropes?" His peering eyes suggested a malicious amusement.

Hesitating, Thurlow began to tell him at some length of the "Morning News": the other paid very little heed, and shortly interrupted with a long complaint of the Museum authorities. His voice wandered on, lost at times in the clatter of foreign tongues, to emerge with sudden vehemence at the end of an incomprehensible sentence. The waiters scurried past them and Thurlow listened drowsily. He was roused by a change of tone.

"I am afraid you're like all the others, Mr. Thurlow, you have fed too well."

Thurlow stared across the table. Sitting stiffly and uneasily, Brebis prodded the air with a short fat finger.

“When I was a young man I went to Greece to dig. They gave me a lot of Greeks—and a very poor man is the modern Greek—and one day young Walpole—he died a year later, you remember, of a celebrated surgeon—young Walpole came to me and said, ‘One of the fellows is sitting down and won’t get up.’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘perhaps he will get up to-morrow.’ But next day he didn’t get up: his wife was dead, or had run away, one or other, no matter: he never got up. I remember him sitting there in the shade of two walls, looking unmoved on all our efforts to rouse him. You know, it came to it that he couldn’t get up, he couldn’t even want to get up. He refused to speak, too. He died quite soon, sooner than I expected: I happened to come along as they were straightening him out, no easy job, I tell you—and there he lay staring up at the fragment of a roof over his head—it was a helpless resigned stare. He looked, Mr. Thurlow, as though they were worrying him in Paradise to straighten up and sing.”

His voice ended thinly, and he stared at the younger man with round inquisitive eyes.

“Thanks for the fable, sir.” Thurlow flushed and hesitated.

“No fable, young man, no fable.” In his annoyance Brebis shifted unwarily to the edge of the seat and clutched at the table.

"Nearly every one I know, overeats," Thurlow said slowly. "My brother does. Carey, the novelist, all the successful journalists I meet. You may remember Weston, the little Fabian : at college I despised him, and attacked him, and loathed him for a smug, efficient Paul Pry. . . ."

"A haberdasher, sir, a spiritual haberdasher."

"I met him last week for the first time since we left college. He is researching under the guidance of his Society, he is happy, and looking forward to a career, not too giddy : he was bursting with facts and good plain living." Thurlow hesitated again and tried to avoid the malicious, unwinking gaze. He added viciously, "To think that I had the impertinence to despise him. Why, I couldn't look him in the face. I——"

"Bursting with theories and fat living, eh ?"

Brebis' triumphant cackle startled a nervous German into a horrible fit of choking. Thurlow, now thoroughly disconcerted, went on desperately.

"The other day a man asked me to write him a series of articles on the education of the country children : an honest series for a socialist weekly. And when I came to write them, I found myself wandering into the rot I should have written for my brother's gentlemanly rag. I had to go back to the man and tell him I couldn't do it. He looked at me and said, 'Too busy, I suppose ?' I tell you I cowered under the sneer."

He broke off. Brebis was looking past him with an expression of intent wonder on his chubby face. He turned to Thurlow. "Wonderful, wonderful," he said. "And all made in butter."

With a stifled gasp, Thurlow turned round and followed his gaze to the glass case where a Gothic castle reared its slender height, wrought in yellow butter.

At the same moment Brebis became assured by some obscure turn of thought that he had lunched, though in truth they had sat neglected for a quarter of an hour. He scrambled down and trotted out of the café. Thurlow, following as quickly as possible, was in time to see him escape a taxi and reach the opposite pavement. Clearly he had forgotten his guest altogether, and the young man decided to let him go.

For some days he went about his work in a state of sullen discontent that annoyed his brother intensely. "You're a damned lucky man, Richard," he said, irritably, "there's a hundred men would give their souls to step into your shoes, and you walk round in them as if they were red hot."

He thought that the speech had been made to deaf ears, but Thurlow remembered the words well enough to repeat them to Denarbon a week later.

The sculptor smoked on in silence for a moment. Then he said slowly—

"He's quite right, of course, from his point of view. Besides, I can't say that I see yours very clearly. If

you hate your work on the 'Morning News'—leave it. If you can't stand being prosperous any longer, try poverty. I promise you that it will wake up your brain."

"I suppose," the other said quickly, "you think it a pretty poor sort of amusement—drawing a good salary for bad work and whining about one's lost soul. It seems a simple enough remedy to cut loose and start again." He paused, and then went on in an odd disjointed fashion. "I'd hate to make a fool of myself. . . . Lord knows I've made a big enough fool as things are. . . . We didn't think at college that I'd end up by being a dirty journalist. . . . I don't even make a good one: one of the Subs said to me yesterday, 'You're a pretty dull sort of a liar, Thurlow' . . . I set out to find the people who were working for freedom—a free state—and join them. . . . In fact, I had a great idea of clearing a road for other men in my case, by examining the various groups of thinkers and workers who were trying to change the social system and—reporting on 'em. It was all very well at college to rag the Society for Fabian Study and talk at large about freedom and working for freedom: it's when you get out and look round for the men who are doing the work you believe in that you're lost. It takes a better man than I am to—to splash round alone until he finds ground under his feet. . . ."

"Of course," Denarbon said carelessly, "you've never splashed round alone."

"No." Thurlow poked the fire into a blaze, and pushed his chair back into the shadows. "No; it's a softening sort of life—well-paid journalism—and they're interested liars who say it isn't. Anyway, I've made every sort of a fool of myself in it: during the past three years I've written a dozen articles for Socialist weeklies, made myself objectionable to every Socialist and Labour group in London, and lost pretty much all the self-confidence I had. I guess I've got fat-minded."

The whimsical smile was short-lived.

"I've lost a good deal more than that—Thea . . ."

Denarbon nodded. "What did you quarrel about?"

"Those damned Pioneers of yours, and nothing more. I lost my temper and hurt her."

Denarbon sat staring into the fire for some time before he answered.

"Of course, she'll come back—or you'll go to her," he said quietly. He poked at the tobacco in his pipe, with a stump of pencil. "You were lovers at college, weren't you?"

The other accepted the full import of the words.

"Yes," he said, "you knew?"

"I guessed: one does guess these things, you know. . . Oh, of course you've not lost her. She's not the sort to forget that. She'd never look at another man. And you were altogether in love. . . ."

"No, it wasn't what you'd call in love. Friends who loved, perhaps. We took each other rather for granted."

Across a long silence Thurlow said : " There's a post I might have for the taking. A new Feminist and Labour weekly is being formed. The money comes from the Feminist women, most of whom I have met at one time or another : and there is a handful of Labour men, some in Parliament, and some hoping to be there. The women came to me about the editorship." He laughed : " They want to run it cheaply, you see. I should imagine that half the paper will consist of articles written for nothing by these wretched females and a good deal of the rest will be columns by the politicians on themselves. There would be an editor, a treasurer and a secretary, and then a committee of the aforesaid avenging angels. The only people paid would be the first three : they put it to me that it was in the cause of humanity. I am damned if I know anyone but a humanitarian who would have offered three pounds a week to edit a paper—three pounds a week ! It's silly. But of course, the very fact that they are trying to buy a man's time and brains for such a sum would give that man a certain hold over them. They'd want to keep him, having got him, and so I should have something of a free hand to say what I liked."

" Then why the devil don't you take it, man : isn't it the chance you want ? "

Thurlow hesitated. " I dislike the crowd," he said at last.

" Well, if that's all . . . "

"It's not," Thurlow added abruptly. "I might find when I'd taken it, that I'd nothing to say after all. There might be nothing behind my ideas but just—more ideas."

"Oh, well . . ." The artist shrugged his shoulders and bent over the dying fire. "Of course it's a risk in other ways," he said at length. "If you married on that salary you would have to live in cheap rooms: how do you suppose Thea would like that?"

"Not at all," Thurlow answered promptly. "She once said, 'I couldn't stand this dingy place, except by myself.'"

"You might live in a pretty little suburb," Denar-bon said, maliciously.

"With Thea doing all her own house work, watering the calceolarias in the garden, trying to write, perhaps, and waiting for me to come home; specialising in feeding and mending me. Thanks, old man, for the vision."

"She'd loathe it," the other man agreed, "loving space and the sea and fine delicate things as she does."

"Other fine women have endured it and are enduring it."

"Because other fools have done it and repented is no reason why you should drag her into a squalid monotony. It's a hellish life for educated people—that herding in unbeautiful, suburban hutches. It may be all right—sweet little nests, you know—for

some folk, but it doesn't do for the sort that has been trained or trained itself to look for beauty until beauty has become as much a need as bread. Love is very well, and friendship is very well, but put yourself and Thea in narrow little rooms and they'll stay narrow and little in your eyes, and you'll smell the dinner cooking in every corner of the house, and sit at breakfast looking into a back yard six feet square at a coal house and an ashbin. Of course Thea is living in ugly rooms now, but the funny thing about lodgings is that you never look at them, or if you do, it's only to feel glad that you don't *live* in them. Besides you know, you can stand things alone that become intolerable seen through another person's eyes. You've been *spoiled*, you and Thea, for the sort of life you ought to live, measured by your income. You'll be making your biggest mistake yet if you ask Thea to become your cook and bottlewasher in a modern colour-washed styé."

Denarbon jabbed savagely at his pipe.

"Well, I wasn't thinking of doing it," Thurlow said mildly, "but, anyway, you see it's not so easy a problem after all. It looks rather as if I must choose between a fat life on the 'Morning News' with Thea—and freedom on three pounds a week without her. One can't go on for ever as we were doing: the secrecy of it was getting more irksome than you would imagine. . . ."

"I can imagine it very well," said Denarbon quietly.

"Of course," Thurlow added slowly, "you've called up the worst possible vision. We shouldn't be so damnably poor. Thea has a little, a very little money—and she is capable of earning her own living."

"Yes, of course she could. Great notion, old man! You could run to a maid-of-all-work, a semi-detached, and a Mudie's sub. . . ."

"That'll do. But is there any reason why we shouldn't make good in time?"

Denarbon laughed heartily. "You'll be a hell of a time doing it, you two: you've let your consciences grow too long to make money quickly. Reminds me that I met a girl the other day who married on the earn-your-own-living basis. She got a post here: her husband tried to do the same, and then had to take a place somewhere in the Midlands—he's a teacher. So there they are, eating their hearts out, and she worrying herself into the idea that it's her duty to go and look after him. Dare say that's where she'll end—in one of those little nests—scared to death of the unborn. . . ."

He peered at Thurlow through the thickening shadows.

"That's where it would get you," he said. "You wouldn't dare have any children, because if you did, Thea couldn't work, and then you couldn't afford it."

He stopped, and then thrust again at the silent figure. "I've often thought I'd like a son: don't suppose I'll ever have one."

The knife was two-edged, and he dropped it.

Thurlow stirred in his chair.

"Guess I don't want to die out. . . . Besides, the thing doesn't seem decent somehow. . . . Makes a wife a—a legalised mistress. Better be as we are—or were."

He stood up and stretched himself wearily.

"Well, you see," he said, "it takes some thinking out," and left the sculptor wandering absently round his studio.

Early on the following day he returned and hailed Denarbon with a cheerful shout.

"I've come off the 'Morning News' " he said,—"and taken on the other paper."

Denarbon stared at him and went on with his work. Thurlow walked across the room and stood watching the nervous muscular fingers.

"I've a suggestion to make," he said. "My half-brother was remarkably sorry to have me commit suicide—as it seems to him. He talked for an hour, but when I persisted he decided to wait and let me learn wisdom before he argued again. I could see it in his eye. However, he presented me with four times the salary due to me. But the point is this. Post of photographic editor on the 'Morning News' will be vacant in a fortnight. I spoke to him about you and found that he knew your work quite well." He hesitated and then went on. "You could have the post if you cared to take it, Henry."

Denarbon turned on him with a sudden and unexpected vehemence. "Curse your damned paper," he said. "I'd rather dig wells in Palestine."

Thurlow talked and reasoned to no purpose, and at last left, more disappointed than he cared to own.

Towards evening Denarbon wandered aimlessly along Fleet Street. During the last few weeks discouragement had settled itself firmly on his shoulders. A searing dissatisfaction shrivelled up his thin faith in the value of the work he had done. The long strain of personal discomfort and underfeeding was taking toll: his muscles were soon tired, his eyes ached continually, the fear of illness began to hang over him. Just when he needed it most, he had even less money than usual. Editors were beginning to look askance on his sketches: he was told that they were harsh and displeasing.

"Hang it all, man," an author had said to him, "do you call that an illustration of the overpowering charms of my Lord-help-us heroine? Why, *that* female couldn't seduce a hungry tiger or a blind, deaf mute."

"God knows what's got into my pencil," Denarbon had answered. "If I draw a man in a woman's arms, I give her a face like a horse. If I draw a ballroom, the dancers are positively indecent, though I couldn't point you out a single detail that would naturally give that impression to the whole picture. It's the same with all I do: it comes out devilishly wrong. . . ."

As he walked he fell into despondent speculation. "What am I going to do when I can't touch even starvation level? What have others like me always done? I'm clever—oh, yes, but I don't stick at things: there's something wanting in me, a certain hardness perhaps, a sort of faculty of success—missing. And yet I'd be worth something, once started. I think I have imagination: I've done already more, far more than the average art student. God, how I have tried—and here I am at twenty-five, beaten, dispirited, useless. What will happen to me? I could teach, like all the other third-rates, for a hundred and fifty a year—and be an independent man—a man who isn't a burden to anyone, a man who's doing his duty. I might even marry on it, but I couldn't have any children. And even my damned independence would be at the beck and call of a set of purse-proud uncultured fools, local tin gods, curse their scrubby little souls. I could settle down in a little town in the provinces, play billiards at the local club, talk about local society to the other masters, and accomodate myself to their little cautious ways, but never think—'I'd rather be a dog and bay the moon'—there I am already, veritably thinking like a Latin master who teaches English to the lower forms, coming out with my little dusty quotations, tags and scrappy ideas. What shall I do? I could clear out before I am hopelessly trapped, right out of England. . . . Probably I ought to teach: my revered aunt, now

happily dead, meant me to teach when she sent me to a third-rate school and a second-rate college. . . . A bargain's a bargain. . . ."

He gave way to a weak despair, sinking through the formless disorder of his thoughts. Then he stopped to wonder where he was. He stood in a long broad street where shops and houses followed each other in an irregular straggling line. In every direction streets of little houses trailed away into the tainted darkness. His mind darted instantly away from his incoherent self-pity.

"What's our socialism going to do for these people, all hanging on to their little bit of respectable livelihood—to whom any risk, any sacrifice, for an idea is unthinkable? If they had—ever—the faintest desire for beauty—or order—it must be utterly gone—dead of the plague. Human brotherhood! Good Lord, it's idiotic in the face of these people. They have their little blind affections, clinging to a few other souls near theirs, in an unthinking clanship—half an inborn tendency, the result of centuries of this huddled life. And outside that, present in all their thoughts and desires, a pervading dull-eyed distrust—instinctive, blind, mean distrust—a fear of the unknown, whether it be bad or good, born of strength or weakness. And yet there is a sort of desolate courage in them, or is it just ignorance and apathy?—every manjack of them carrying so many burdens to the grave—children, a wife, a home. If they gave up having children—for

three years only—even for one year—no more food for powder, no more machines for factories : they could ask almost anything from the state and get it. The Socialist party ought to organise a secret service of Malthusian Friars."

He felt more cheerful on the instant, but as he stopped a bus, reflected on the horrible prejudice and difficulty that would meet his new Order, and was immediately depressed. He turned back to his weary thought of the future, and leaving the bus at the bottom of Ludgate Hill, walked down to the Embankment. Here, his lapsed sense of humour returned for the moment, and he forbore to follow out his first idea of spending the night on one of the seats.

But as he crossed Waterloo Bridge, the realisation of bodily weariness aggravated his sense of helpless inefficiency. "I wonder what Life was driving at when she evolved me. There must be some use for the clever incapables. Given the conditions we shouldn't be incapable. But I want to know what this blasted Life force was getting at in me—does it run into blind alleys and leave things unfinished ? Look at me, with all my intellect, all my imagination—useless—like a heap of machinery got together by a man who's forgotten the motive power. What shall I do ?—what shall I do, oh God, to keep out of the little, wary ways of thinking, the little, stealthy schemes ? . . ."

Very late that night he went back to his studio in Hampstead. For a while he stood looking at the

unfinished sketches, and the ghostly figures in their swaddling bands. He stretched out his arms in swift anguished entreaty.

"Oh God, I have tried, I have tried—give me help now."

The clay heard his cry and kept its silent immobility. . . .

During the days that followed, Julie discovered a change in the manner of his love. He had been gentle to the point of irritating her. Now he gave way to moods of incomprehensible harshness: his frenzied embrace hurt her, and he laughed at her complaints.

"You don't really mind," he said, "you like it." In her arms he found something like peace: he hid from her the intensity of his suffering. Away from them he tortured himself with his knowledge of her, born of possession. There were times when it pleased him to pore over it. "It is a pity you have no soul," he told her. "Yet would the soul of one's mistress be so desirable a possession as her body?" He laughed, looking down at her with an insolence that passed into feverish entreaty. "The soul of your grandam's cat may inhabit the body of your mistress. . . ."

CHAPTER VI

EXTRACTS from a letter written by John Brinton in Florence to Richard Thurlow in London.

“ I am sorry that you are the editor of ‘ The Beacon.’ I have read through the copy you sent me, and found in it nearly all my old enemies, the pestilential Fabian, the Feminist, and the addle-pated Labour man. It is printed on the cheapest of paper : there is a column headed ‘ Posers for Politicians ’ : what more need I say about it ? To be sure—there is your leader attacking the decision of the Trade Unions to vote more money for political propaganda—an excellent attack, perhaps too finely pointed. There is an article by our friend Norden, prettily ironical, on the ethics of Feminism. But, my dear Richard, the rest of the paper—articles, correspondence, reviews—is subtly but quite insistently derisive of your views and his. . . .

“ I gather that you are not editor only, but copy-reader and several other things. I have seen too many men—clever, eager, tireless workers ; tireless idealists—stripped and left for dead by hag-ridden reformers, itching to see themselves in the newspaper files. I had dreamed of finer things for you. . . .

“ There is an extraordinary lack of dignity about

modern reform : if it is not howling in the Albert Hall—that mausoleum of dead rebels, it is peering through the cracks in poverty's walls and listening at misery's keyhole. Modern life in all its phases lacks dignity. I would not have had you in politics. The once dignified old lady of Saint Stephens is a sly old harridan ready for any doubtful trick. . . .

“ You have put many things out of your reach—marriage for one. I do not care to think that you would take your wife into one of those rows on rows of horrible villas. The home life of England's most respectable citizens has become appallingly indecent since the advent of the jerry builder. I am foolish enough to think that dignity is essential to love and marriage : and dignity is one of the things impossible in the dreadful intimacy of a neo-malthusian kennel. . . .

“ I take a paragraph from your horrible paper. The writer is one Vera McCullam, and I touch it only to prove my point : that when women begin to open the doors of Acacia Villa and Rose Cottage the effect on spectators may be something like the effect on that lover in Swift's disagreeable poem who stumbled upon his Chloe's linen basket. Here is the paragraph. ‘ Nothing can be more apparent and more distasteful than the prevailing greasiness of the average married couple. This may be the inevitable result of our primitive methods of wooing and marriage. Take the ordinary ‘ nice girl ’ whose courtship has consisted of

kisses on lips and cheeks—half furtive caresses, held hands and clasped waist, suddenly confronted on her marriage night with the naked body and naked lusts of her husband. The result in many cases is a passive or even active dislike of wifehood : this rarely becomes more than mere toleration and after a first experience of motherhood not even that. Such women are either coarsened or hardened by their experience : glamour and passion depart. In successful marriages the couple may reach a greasy state of being used to each other, with some affection felt on both sides—especially perhaps for the mother of desired children. Often there is nothing but the affection of wont.’ Horrible, isn’t it ? There is a lot more, but your one reading of it must have been wry work. But you can see my meaning : there is a poisoned swamp somewhere. . . .

“ Marriage ? Delivering oneself bound into the power of an inferior nature ? The thought has always been distasteful. A clever woman fidgets and probes : a stupid one is a lasting irritation. Poor Carey ! The kindest and sweetest of women have their malignant side : an instinctive jealousy of a husband’s reserve. . . .

“ I have wished that I had a son. And then I have looked round upon the sons of my friends : there was Mary Stirling, the gentle last of a line of gentle folk. How came she to have that foul-mouthed squire of a son ? He broke his neck in the hunting field and she said that she wished he had died when he was a red-faced little lad learning to ride. He used to fill the

house with boors and drunkards, and be carried home four or five times a week from the village 'Three Tuns.' And Harry Usherwood, whose son married a harlot and shot himself a year later.

"Faith, I have shirked life most damnably. As a boy I used to lie awake and think: 'I may live seventy years: a year goes like a bird—so swiftly. Only sixty more of them and then you die, struggling and choking.' Oh, folly to struggle and sweat for that moment of eternity: a heavy weight seemed pressed on my head. If a malicious god granted men a true sense of proportion, they would die in a universal despair. . . .

"I am kind to my workmen because it would worry me to think that they suffered while I live in an amber city. So I shirk my duty as a capitalist, and cannot keep my managers! I shirked fatherhood for fear of sorrow and disappointment. And as life is three parts sorrow I have not lived. . . .

"I shall be in London in autumn, and we must talk things over. I refuse to contemplate you in the rôle of a sweated reformer."

CHAPTER VII

DURING the day-time Shepherd's Bush is a rather jaded female, a little fond of yellow lace, a little draggled as to feathers, but ordinary enough. At night the road of that name is a strident old harridan. The white glare from the shops wavers and dies out on the fringes of the Green, where night gathers her cloak forlornly round the huddled figures on the benches. Across the way, the lights of the Empire rush out and up. Half-way down the road the jangle of a mechanical piano comes from a sorry Palace of Fun. A Salvation Army drums up its gods round the corner of a side street. Round all flows an unending sea of harsh sounds, clatter of tongues, shuffle of feet, cackling of fools.

In the white glare of that old hag among streets, even Youth is ghastly and hollow-eyed. Night after night through a warm spring and an intolerable summer Richard Thurlow walked through it, but his eyes had not used themselves to it. He kept them half closed until he turned down to the right into a dim street of small worn-out houses. As he opened the door of one, he staggered slightly: on the stairs he caught at the bannisters for support, and outside his

room dizziness smote him so hard that he fell, lurching heavily against the door across the landing.

There was a moment's pause: then through a cautious opening peered the round bristling face of the other lodger. Thurlow knew him as the man who came in drunk three nights out of seven, crooning happily to himself until he fell asleep. As Thurlow got painfully to his feet, the other man broke into a subdued chuckle.

"Are you the young man that's been knocking at my door?" he said, and began again his ridiculous laughter.

Rather hazily Thurlow felt himself helped across the room and into a chair.

"You look rare and queer: been drinking on an empty stomach, I'll be bound."

Thurlow roused himself. "I'm not drunk, you one-eyed idiot," he said irritably, "it's this foul heat, and I'm hungry."

The other peered at him, and then, limping across the room to a cupboard, brought out cups and plates and two large sandwiches.

"I must say," he observed, "and I wish there was more folks than you to hear me say it—that the best ham sandwiches in London come off the coffee-stall at the top end of the Green, the top end, mind. And no one can say better than I can—who've tried 'em from Tidal Basin to Ealing."

"They're decent enough." Thurlow lay back in

the lop-sided basket chair, dully quiescent in the unexpected happening, and aching from head to foot. A moment later he opened his eyes to add : " If you go into my room you'll see a thing to make coffee in, and a tin of coffee beside it."

He watched the door shut behind the other man, and straightway forgot him. Backwards and forwards he tramped on the long walk from the offices of the " Beacon " to Shepherd's Bush. Noon, and the glare of the sun on white pavement in the morning : noon and the glare of electric light on white pavement in the evening. This was not his room, but very like it, faded everywhere to an indeterminate brown. The electric snake from the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street should not have been in a corner of it. Neither should the Scotchman with the wagging beard who blinked across the river every night. He shut his eyes to get rid of them.

Eight months since he had taken on the editorship of " The Beacon." They had not all been spent in a bed-sitting room in Shepherd's Bush. He stopped in his reflections to comment on the idiocy of the term : no one can sleep decently in a sitting-room, or sit happily in a bedroom. Then he dragged his thoughts back. Spring in Russell Square. That had not been bad : a procession of flowers, yellow and white, slipped past his eyes. " The Beacon " had never paid : every week its losses were between twenty and thirty pounds. The women who were backing it got impatient. After

a while they cut his salary down to two pounds a week, and then to one pound, going each time through the same form of speech. "We can't afford to carry it on any longer. 'The Beacon' must go out, Mr. Thurlow. We are sorry." Then he offered to take less, and cut down other expenses to a minimum. They were grateful, and refrained from asking whether he lived on his salary.

Why had he done it? He dived among his motives. There was an unreasoned determination to stick at the thing he had put his hand to. He would not have his friends pity him or his enemies remark that he could stay at nothing. Then there was Athenais: she had jeered at his irresolution. Moreover, the work was not without its exhilarating side. He could write what he pleased, and found freedom worth having, even the freedom of an outcast in Fleet Street. He frowned as the thought struck across his mind that those women had not of late been so careful to avoid a quarrel. There was a fair-haired young fool straight from college with a father ready to pay for his folly: he fancied that they saw in that same fool a future and more docile editor. Meanwhile he had worked hard for them, so hard that he had had no time left for other work. He moved first to Acton, then to Shepherd's Bush. When he had paid for his rooms and his breakfast he had half his weekly salary left. The breakfasts were getting less and worse every day. Under his system of spasmodic economy he found

himself every Thursday or Friday without money for food or bus fares. Then he walked to and from the Strand, cut off his coffee-stall suppers and his A.B.C. lunch.

He smiled suddenly, remembering a bad debt that had unexpectedly turned head over heels and presented itself before him in the form of an apologetic letter and an order for ten shillings. He had eaten half of it at a pink-lighted café in Hammersmith, and lost the other among the book shops of Charing Cross Road. The smile went, and the lines of strain round his mouth returned.

The door was suddenly kicked open, and his fellow lodger entered perilously, a tin under his arm, the coffee-maker in one hand, the kettle and a jug of milk in the other.

He smiled contentedly at Thurlow and remarked :
“ I got your name from the old lady : mine’s Poskett, though you didn’t ask.”

An hour later, Thurlow was listening drowsily to an interminable Poskett. He had been a horse doctor in Alberta, a journalist in Shanghai, a chemist in Karachi. Thurlow dozed, recovered himself, and dozed again. A phrase roused him—“ great vasty arches.”

“ Where ? ” he asked.

“ Egypt—you—you warn’t listening.”

Poskett sounded abashed. Thurlow lied satisfactorily.

“ Egypt—it was night I was telling ye about—the sky at night. Great blue-black arches and the stars

riding across them all night. You've never seen stars if you've never seen them. Makes them stars up there—" he nodded vaguely at the dirty ceiling—" seem like silly bits of spangles."

"When were you in Egypt?"

"Once," he said vaguely, and then with an abrupt jauntiness, "I'm an Oxford man, you know."

"I don't believe you." Thurlow was nearly asleep.

"Well, you needn't." Poskett spoke mildly. "It's not true, anyway."

"Oh." Thurlow's interest woke with a start. "Were you ever in Egypt?"

"No. Nor in none of them other places either."

"Then why the devil did you want to spin me all those yarns?"

The little man was really indignant.

"What sort of a chap do you think I am to ask a man in and entertain him with true tales? What d'you take me for?"

Thurlow looked at him and roared with laughter. The other's round face twitched with annoyance, but when Thurlow stopped exhausted, he broke into a crowing laugh that seemed to startle even himself.

"I still don't see why you put yourself to such trouble."

"It isn't a trouble," Poskett spoke eagerly, "it comes natural to me to be agreeable. I got no use for facts when they're not interesting. You don't want

me to tell you how I was a commercial traveller with a Board School education."

"But I didn't ask you for the story of your life: you've just been lying gratuitously to amuse yourself."

Poskett argued.

"I don't see why not? Ordinary folks' lives are bad enough without 'em going about telling the truth about 'em. Get away with your facts. They got nothing—nothing beautiful about them." He flushed awkwardly.

"Beautiful." Thurlow stopped on the word.

Poskett wriggled uneasily in his chair. "Places, strange places, you know—and words, and such like." His face brightened. "The wind-devouring hollows of the hills," he recited loudly. "What do you think of that now—or this—'Pale high gold above the dying sun.' I thought of both those, only yesterday."

"What do you do it for?" The interruption went unheeded.

"Sometimes it's things I think of. Maybe a glass flask with a long narrow neck—full of scent—like once in Antwerp when I was a little boy my father took me into one of them old yellow houses facing the quay and a lady gave me one like that—red it was, with gold tracing. And then we went on into a little dark street with high buildings and little dark shops at the foot of them. You come out of it—sudden like—on to the square where the cathedral is. Full of flowers, daffodils and violets and such, white and yellow and green

in the sunshine. There was a bookshop at the corner and once I was looking in it—the old man, he had gone down the Rue de la Meir to get me chocolates from the café there—and a gentleman and lady took me inside and let me choose four books for myself.”

He caught Thurlow's eye and broke off, grinning guiltily.

“I was once in Antwerp, all the same,” he said, “and Brussels too, when I was sent with an exhibit to the Ghent Exhibition.”

“What do you do now?” Thurlow asked, in the silence that followed.

“Travel. I travel in Salzmann's Salve.”

“Red letters on a yellow ground,” Thurlow observed idly.

“That's it.” Gloom fell on Poskett. “It touches the spot.”

“I been most things in my day,” he added. “Once I was a weaver, but when it came to winter I couldn't stand that. Up at five, crawl on your hands and knees over the ice in the dark lanes, over a couple of fields, and work like hell till the whistle blows. Then I worked where they made them mosaic brooches. I liked that now. I'd like to have stopped at that. Dainty work, it was. Something happened: folks got tired of 'em maybe. Anyway, I got turned off, and a lot of others.”

There was another pause, and then he went on.

“I often thought,” he spoke diffidently, with an eye

on Thurlow for signs of derision, "I often thought what a lot o' muddle might be saved if some one only thought it all out. There was me like—clever with me fingers, though I say it—and here I go round selling tins of muck. I ought to been kept at fine work. Someone ought 'ter have seen to it.

"A silly snippety sort o' life most folk live. Seems like it was muddled from the beginning. A man like me got no standing, no place in life. . . ."

He stopped again and chuckled abruptly.

No home, thank God; I got rid o' that."

Did you abandon it?" Thurlow asked mildly.

The little man jogged himself up and down on his chair.

"Walked out of it, I did, and never came back. You behold in me a heartless scoundrel."

He broke again into his peculiar crowing laugh.

"Is it truth, or a beautiful lie?"

"It's facts—true facts. I left my wife ten—twelve years ago. And never seen her from that day to this."

His voice sank into a murmur: he smiled at the vision. "Roundish sort of a woman with a brown eye. She was a good bit older than me, but I thought to myself, as I'd many a time heard it said, 'The best stock comes out of the oldest pot.' And we got on very well—very well—until one night she sat up in bed and looked at me undressing. 'Your legs is too thin,' she says. 'Sorry to disappoint you, my dear,' I says, joking like. 'Oh, it's no disappointment,' says

she, ' I expected as much, most men's legs are too fat or too thin.' . . . "

" You know, it made me feel regularly uncomfortable. I always used to think she was sizing me up after that : and when I'd got as far as my shirt, I used to wish there was a screen I could get behind. . . . Besides, I didn't like the sound of it somehow. ' A respectable woman don't make such general remarks about men ' I said to her, and she only laughed. . . . Anyway, she'd ruined our happiness, and after a bit I got that I couldn't stand it, and I left her. She was better off than me, anyway."

It might have been an hour later that Thurlow woke up with a start. He was in his own bed, though he did not remember leaving Poskett's armchair. He lay still, staring at the dim outline of the window. Then with an incoherent cry of misery he turned and buried his face in the pillow. " Thea, Thea—dear heart, Thea—have I lost you for always, Thea——"

But in the morning when he rose and went about his business, friendship and work had not lost their savour, and life was still to be lived.

He walked to the reading-room of the Museum and began his leading article. Half-way through he remarked ruefully to himself, " My brain creaks this morning." The lady on his left distracted him. Her face was thin and worn by age, but she had curled her grey hair and drawn it out under a hat of astonishing gaiety. Her wisp of a body drooped in a faded muslin

gown that might have wrapped its youthful slimness. She had collected a pile of books and went feverishly through them, making extracts in a large notebook, and fidgetting on her chair until Thurlow was ready to protest. He gave up the attempt to write, and gazed round the room. A giant of a man with a shock of thick black hair, and shaped in front like a bow window, was approaching as near as he might to the Index. Thurlow recognised a well-known poet and journalist. "Some one told me he was dying." Then the thought struck him that the poet had been unable to get through the doors of death and he laughed aloud. The echo ran madly round the room. His neighbours looked up indignantly: he gathered up his papers and went.

Not a breath of wind moved in the streets: a thin curtain of rain hung like a mist about the city. For a few minutes Thurlow walked rapidly towards the flickering "Beacon," growing warmer and more rebellious at every step. When at last he stopped and looked round him, he felt a shock of surprise. He was taking the shortest way to the Strand, but somewhere on the road he had stepped aside. He stood in a little narrow street paved with cobble stones. On each side rose tall tenement houses. There were flowers in the windows, and in the doorway of one an old woman in a white cap sat and knitted and crooned a wordless air. "Sur le pont d'Avignon." In the sunlit silence the old air rose thin and sweet. A bird

in a cage over her head broke shrilly into her song : she smiled across at Thurlow. The sun was surely shining : beneath his feet the grass pushed between the cobble stones. He walked away softly for fear of little folk. As he turned the corner he stepped into the clangour of London as through a door. There was no sun in the stooping sky, and the rain pricked his face.

Thurlow stood irresolute. "I can't go to that damned crater," he said at last. "I'll go to Kew. It never rains in Kew."

It did not rain, as he walked over the grass towards the group of firs that laid their sombre branches delicately against the blue of a clear sky. Beyond them, sitting on the grass with her eyes turned towards the gleaming river, he came upon Athenais. For one moment the clamour in his ears deafened him : then he was bending over her.

"Thea."

She did not show surprise, but smiled as to herself. "She expected me to come back" : the thought and the flickering resentment died together. He knelt beside her.

"Thea."

"Richard."

Careless voices drifted through the trees : splash of oars on the hidden river : these were not the sounds they heard, but the far-off fall of water and the quiver of leaves that were long since dead and trodden into

the ground. Between the pillars of the trees came two that met them, with shining eyes and brows fronting the dawn. And that which had been the towing-path to Richmond was a narrow lawn set in the green wood where Love held court, heard complaint, and judged wrong done him. Then passed the fair chronicled company of his lords and ladies who lived when love was, an amorous dream and living a rite of chivalry, who would not go to a monk's heaven but died in a ballade and were wrapped in Romaunce as in a winding sheet. And they whose hands and feet were torn with long seeking; and they who had wandered in strange ways and wept at dawn for the king's highway, and these also the god's wing touched and healed. And last came two across the patterned grass and knelt for pardon. . . .

Careless voices drifted through the trees : splash of oars on the hidden river. The girl looked down at the face pressed against her arm. It had grown thinner and lost for ever the half-arrogant, half-nervous confidence of early youth. A sudden remorse prompted her caress. Thurlow lifted his head and drew her closer : they sat in silence, taking comfort for their trailing dreams and bruised hopes from the mere pressure of one young body against another. A chill wind ran across the tops of the river grasses : clouds swept down upon the failing sun, and through the leaves above them pricked the slender lances of the rain.

Athenais stirred reluctantly. "Let us go, sweetheart." He lifted her to her feet and she rested a moment in his arms. "I wouldn't care," he said unsteadily, "I wouldn't care if I'd found you again all hard and spoiled and tired. I've wanted you so. I'd want you anyway."

They climbed over to the towing-path and walked slowly back to Kew.

"What a fool you thought me," he said ruefully, "and what a fool I was. . . . No, don't babble, sweet. . . . I'll tell you what I've been since I left college—a talking prig and nothing but a talking prig. I guess I'd got the clean-slate disease very badly. Strange passion the youthful reformer has for the big sponge : as if one could ever wipe England's slate clean ! What made you put up with me so long as you did ? "

"Don't, Richard, don't. We were both nearly hanged in our own conceit, and we're both paying for it. Did you know, I wonder, I only got a second in Economics ? "

"That's not bad : you don't need to say it as if you were disgraced for life, little woman. And anyway, I guess you'd have got a first if you'd respected your betters."

"Don't say it. It's the sop one offers to the hopeless failures, and I'm not that." She recovered herself swiftly. "Besides, it's not true, and if it were—

"The sheep that winna dree his weird
Along with the flock, he shall be sheared."

He looked down at the vivid laughing face. "Did you make that up, sweetheart?"

"Just this very minute," she told him, and began abruptly to talk about the Pioneers, with swift, nervous phrases. She had an inbred impatience of the spoken word, and talked most readily in disjointed phrases, often curiously illuminating, like lights marking the path of her thoughts. Thurlow listened contentedly, hearing less the words than the eager voice.

"I used to think of you," he said suddenly, "talking, jeering at me, discussing things. Do you know, Thea, you're making quite a little name for yourself. I know more than one man with an opinion worth having, who buys the 'Pioneer' just to read your article across the middle page."

"Did you read it?" she asked eagerly.

"Did you think I wouldn't?"

"Those articles were not meant for the well-informed: they were just a critical history of economic doctrines—written plainly for workers and all who had not time to go into the matter for themselves. I bought your paper always: it's good, Richard—the part written by you and the one or two after your heart. It's very good, and the series of articles on education you are doing now is the cleverest thing you've done—clever and sane. But you know, the rest of the paper is beginning to swamp you. People I meet at Margaret's meetings ask me what you are doing in that galley."

“Those articles bring me in hundreds of letters a week—from teachers and others. But I’ve made a mistake,” he admitted, “it takes a better man than I am to run a race with a lot of damned old women on his back.”

“I believe I’ve made another,” she told him, a little reluctantly. “It’s not,” she went on quickly, “that there is any lack of good men among the Pioneers, or of energy, or fine spirit. I believe firmly that they have gathered up most of the best men amongst the workers—the most alive. And there’s a spirit in them, a flame—if only it doesn’t burn itself out wantonly. Hartley is a good man, but, you know, he doesn’t believe in them: he works desperately on, like a man trying to push a way through a jungle with his head. There are others. But the odds against them—my dear! The ignorance, the false thinking, the froth of talk. Hartley said once he felt like a little engine, trying to pull an excursion train up the Matterhorn. They’re as suspicious as—as savages, and they don’t see that their very suspiciousness makes them an easier prey to the axe-grinders. There’s more than one man in a fat Trades Union post that stepped into it out of our ranks, and promptly turned on us. Sometimes it seems utterly hopeless: the working-classes make me think of a large soft octopus, trying to hit out in a different direction with each limb. A man with a sword could cut it to ribbons.”

"You've used the sword yourself at times," he told her.

"They don't like me," she said a little wistfully. "Just now the women—the militant suffrage women—are pulling us all over, taking up half the paper, wasting time and energy in a fashion that makes Hartley weep. As if they had the right, while there is one ill-paid, ill-fed working-woman in England. I have used all my little wits against them: they are making it difficult for me."

Thurlow nodded. "I understand," he said slowly, "I like that idea of Hartley's—a heavy train and the Matterhorn. Thea, we've got to get away from the 'New Machiavelli,' and Remington's most damnable New Tory Party, and his Blue Weekly, which I suppose was vastly like the 'New Statesman. . . .' And away from all their idealistic cant, into the grime and filth of the East End, or Leeds or Liverpool—where you will."

"You don't want to be a super-slummer with a sort of Nietzschean C.O.S., Richard?"

"Charity be damned." Thurlow evaded the challenge. "There's power there waiting to be used, power among your troublesome Pioneers. Fine ideas and the Parliament of Man won't touch these people. A vast power of hate blown into them might move them, push them until even when the power failed they'd be afraid to go back. Power—that's what I want, power behind me—no, within me. The energy

latent in these scurrying streets and blind moles of men. If one could gather it up—release it—let it loose on the world—direct it. . . .”

They had crossed the bridge now, and unconsciously he walked faster beneath the cold blue glare of the arc-lamps, his brain reeling a little, leaping forward in confused haste under the sudden impulse of a new idea, an idea he felt dimly to be momentous, of spiritual value.

The girl was watching him intently: she saw the flame flicker and die in his eyes, and the shoulders droop wearily. He turned to her, with a smile.

“I’m not the New Messiah, Thea,” he said. “I guess you’ve got an ineffectual sort of a lover. The Lord that raised me up a judge in Israel forgot to raise me up a king as well.”

Before the pity that clutched her heart had swept into words, there came to her a moment of rare insight. In the years that followed she used that instinctive knowledge to bring him content—the content of a good craftsman with his work and his skill.

“You can be John the Baptist,” she said, and her voice trembled.

He turned to her with an eagerness that shook her self-control. She took refuge in low-spoken mockery.

“Goodness knows you’re thin enough,” she said.

CHAPTER VIII

“THE ghost that walketh before thee is greater than thou art. Why dost thou not give it of thy flesh and thy bones?”

Richard Thurlow left Thea at the door of her rooms and walked back to Shepherd's Bush in a state of exaltation peculiar to his kind. Images flickered across his eyes, eluded him, turned tail, and appeared in new fashions. Midnight came while he was still sitting on the edge of his bed, staring across the room, hands clasped round the bedpost, head pressed against them. The flame of the candle blew wildly in the draught from a window: the wax melted into winding sheets and ran unheeded on to the brown horrors of the carpet.

It seemed to him that he had reached a clear and definite understanding of the lines his work must follow—so clear that he was amazed at his long blundering. That it was clear as a skeleton may be called clear, and definite by a deliberate ignoring of many problems, he did not or would not see. When later he was forced to see it, he had clothed the skeleton in his flesh, given it of his blood, so that it walked in its own strength and carried him with it. By that

token he takes his humble place among all other reformers and teachers of faiths : good men all, who willy-nilly, become at their latter end the servants of the faith they reared. The Messiah is not yet come who shall be mightier than his mission.

Because his work brought him a fame of sorts you shall look upon the skeleton that he made in a respectable hovel in Shepherd's Bush. You might find a man in Archangel who read and followed him, another in Shanghai, another in Santos. And you might speak to five hundred reading men and women in London without finding one who had ever read a line of his writings. None the less, he was content in his work, and may God grant all faithful craftsmen the like boon.

His thoughts ran thus—

'Society—taking the term to cover the working world—is one damned muddle, held together by common distrusts. In the workshops the feudal system of crafts was dying hard before the modern industrialists—once called the Manchester school—came along and tore it up by the roots. They took the tree of society and set it in the ground again anyhow, roots waving to the sky.'

The waving arms of a park orator presented themselves suddenly to his mind : he abandoned the metaphor impatiently. 'Under the guidance of the capitalist with his army of machines a kind of desperate haste took possession of society. Flesh and blood workers, all being machines in the capitalist view of

things, were so regarded in current economics. Hence they are required to subsist on as little as possible, receiving wages merely as a machine of steel or iron receives oil.'

"We've got to smash the economist before we get far," he declared abruptly, "and to do it we've got to have economists of our own: who can meet training with training, expert knowledge with expert knowledge. We'll face the expert with his younger brother and outface him."

Returning—'The machines brought in their train a scale of industrial values that placed quantity on a level with—if not before—quality of production.' His thoughts darted aside—'One might consider the effect of the growth of the Pacific countries on that quantitative ideal in England.'

'At the same time every improvement in machinery was used to displace the more troublesome human machines.

Society became a chaos wherein a man sold his body to the highest bidder, or to any bidder, or to none at all. In the latter case he starved or was added to the expensive scrap-heap of the Poor Law.

Into the chaos of trades and professions—and politics—enter woman, to the consequent aggravation of the struggle, ravening for independence, setting up double standards in the world of wages, scrambling with men for a foothold in the chaos.

Enter also the official who having achieved Parlia-

ment desires to keep the energy of the worker for ever diverted to the cockpit of politics.

Enter the Fabian with his little maps of the infernal regions.

Enter the benevolent capitalist, the employer whose benevolence pays him ten per cent. and keeps his workers quiet.

Enter finally the uneasy agitator and the disgruntled rebel.

Society, in truth, is in the state of a ship with a crew, each man of which is bent on a different port, and with half-a-dozen captains each trying to placate the crew. That man determines the port who has the greatest interest. In the case of our old hulk of State the man who wins happens to be the moneyed man, the super-trader, the Press-suckled Captains of Industry. Captains, forsooth—they call the fools who have created a chaos that will surely swallow them—and not them alone. You may look where you please, the place is a shambles in which no one class seems to have any definite idea of what it wants or how to get it. And where the only determined moves are those made in the direction of gilded slavery for the workers.

Now I take it that in such a chaos it is the blind panic rushes that have to be faced. If one could but compel folk to stop and think : the women to consider whether they are wise to do little more than urge each other on into a market where the rules of buying and selling are all in favour of the buyer : the worker to

consider whether he has any aim behind and beyond his clamour for bread and cocoa: the statesmen whether they shall fall in with the trader or the worker in the coming struggle.

"I am not sure," he added aloud, "whether statesmen will not have first to consider the necessity of being born."

He stood up stiffly and flung up his arms.

"A work for a lifetime and many a man's lifetime. If we can't be the masons of the new State, we can be the men who come with a great hose before dawn and flush the streets. In every shape and form we can fight cant—the cant of politician, economist, feminist, priest—not omitting to keep an eye open for our own. We can examine every new move, every proposal by whomsoever made—judge it by the one test—does it make for freedom and free citizens in a living State, or for slavery and slave-workers in a dying State. We can make ourselves offensive if necessary—fight with the buttons off. A glorious game—

Speak to them home. Mince not the common tongue,
Name Cleopatra as she is called in Rome,
Rail them in Fulvia's phrase.

Shakespeare, I'm sorry. We shall have youth on our side, new eyes and new brains and new strength. I shall not want for helpers. They'll come from the colleges and the ranks of the workers: an army of iconoclasts—men that can write, and men that can talk, a new brand of experts—honest ones. If they

won't let me use 'The Beacon,' I'll find another platform. Oh, it's been a hard apprenticeship, this last year, but I guess I'll make it worth it."

The candle flared madly and died down. He discovered that he was cold and astonishingly weary. Listening, he heard Poskett moving in the next room ; and on a sudden impulse went in to parade the skeleton before him. He felt a craven desire for the praise of that cheerful liar to fill up the measure of his spent exhilaration.

Poskett heard him out with an expression of bewilderment passing slowly into disgust. When Thurlow stopped he sneered after the reputed fashion of the stage.

" So you're only an idea-nark after all," he said, and turning his back, limped across the room to shut the window.

" A what ? "

" I've told you a what—an idea-nark—a fellow that takes a man's ideas and touches them up a bit and then says ' Hark to me : I'm a clever fellow, I am.' All that you've said I told you only last night : about the muddle and so on. And you sat there making out to be too tired to blink. Garn—you scut ! "

But Thurlow, startled into forgetfulness of an aching head, laughed unashamedly. " Maybe you're right," he said. " I shouldn't be surprised. Or maybe . . . Poskett, you're my antithesis—no, my alter ego."

He departed to his bed, and before Poskett fell

asleep he heard, indignantly, muffled sounds of laughter from the other room.

As Thurlow gathered up his papers in the morning he remembered ruefully that it was Friday. Every week on Friday morning he went reluctantly to Denmark Hill, where the largest subscriber to "The Beacon" held a Board Meeting in her house.

"Board meeting!" he had said to Norden. "Good Lord—if you could hear and see them. For that matter you could: they make it a drawing-room reception where you may come and bring a friend. There's half a dozen women from Mrs. Destin's crowd: several suffragists, non-militant: our old friend Redesdale, who wasn't knave enough to succeed in Parliament, and now every week in the columns of 'The Beacon' proves the truth of the saying that if a man is not a knave he must be a fool. There's one or two men who are too good to stay with us: they are making a name and then they'll fly away where the worms are fatter. And there's the usual old rebel who knew Marx and Engels and ought to be mouldering with them in his grave instead of up here in broad daylight. Oh, Lord, what a crew. They chatter and quarrel: Redesdale says in his engaging way, 'Now, you know, we've got to win for the sake of our poor lost sisters. Let us all get together and do our best.' He has a series of articles on the White Slave Traffic in his pocket, and I wake up at night from a nightmare dream that I have had to print them. They attack

me—never openly—in every way : the women are the worst, they make up nearly the whole of the weekly deficit, and half our space must be set aside for them.”

A wind had sprung up in the night : white clouds sailed in a cold blue sky, and shadows chased each other across the sunlit spaces of the city. As Thurlow walked up Denmark Hill the falling leaves swirled round his feet. The wind sang in the air ; he repressed an insane desire to shout as he walked. Beside him limped Poskett, all memory of his anger faded. Thurlow, meeting him on the stairs, had offered an invitation. He was going, he said, to the meeting of a private committee of enquiry into the morals of the poor : would Poskett care to come ; and Poskett came, childishly delighted by the invitation and determined to acquit himself well if called upon to speak. As he trotted along by Thurlow's side his lips were forming themselves into the phrases of that speech. He would take his stand before the aspidistra in the window and rest one hand, perhaps, on a chair, carelessly and easily. He would tell them the awful truth of the case, of course, but gently : he might perhaps apologise for not picking his words ‘ I am a plain man, a man near the heart-beats of the people. . . .’

“ Here we are,” Thurlow said suddenly. The vision fled : Poskett followed meekly through the grounds of a fair-sized house.

The house was indeed larger than he had expected and the maid who opened the door abashed him by

her indifferent stare. He envied Thurlow his height and lithe carriage. Once inside the crowded room he seated himself, rather unhappily, in a big chair : the back had a slope to it that made sitting upright difficult and leaning back a strain on one's audacity. He tried resting both arms on the arms of the chair : that, he thought, looked affected, and he concealed one hastily. Then he saw, or thought he saw, a smile of amusement on the face of a tall, beautiful girl. He flushed crimson with mortification, and thought of escape. But a group of young men stood before the door, talking and laughing together like silly idiots. " Young asses," he whispered, " young asses. Never did a day's work in their lives : know as much about life as an unborn kangaroo." He clung desperately to an assurance of empirical superiority, settling himself fiercely in his chair.

Thurlow was listening unhappily to a big rosy-faced man who smiled unwaveringly as he spoke. " My dear sir," Poskett heard Thurlow say, " don't you think that the white slaves in the factories are in more urgent need than those in the Leicester Lounge ? " There was a sudden movement through the room : the black-gowned hostess was rapping on a small table. Rustling and whispering, the groups of people spread themselves on couches and chairs : to his sick dismay Poskett found himself in the very forefront of the meeting, with only a pink stretch of carpet between him and that expansive figure at the table.

His brain whirled dizzily, and for some time he caught only odd phrases in the discussion. When he was a little soothed, he gathered that Thurlow was being called upon to defend some statement that he had made.

“To be frank,” Thurlow said, “I think that we are injuring the paper by giving so much space to views—which may be estimable in the opinion of a section—but only in the opinion of that section. No one knows better than I do the immense amount of work that is done by Mrs. Destin and her research workers. But surely we hold no brief for the economic and social theories put forward by the National Committee for Social Reform, and we ought not to let it appear that ‘The Beacon’ is a mere organ of that Committee. We have given far too much space already to its work, and that is partly why I refused to print the article submitted by Miss Logan.”

One or two men at the back of the room ranged themselves on his side, but it was clear to Poskett that the feeling of the meeting was against him.

“Perhaps,” said the chairwoman, “it would be as well if Miss Logan gave us—quite briefly—the gist of her article.”

To Poskett’s surprise Miss Logan turned out to be the girlish beauty who had laughed at him. He wished earnestly that she might make a fool of herself, but her cold self-possessed tones took that hope from him almost before it was formed.

“The scheme outlined in the article,” she said, “was not mine, though I am in agreement with it. It is merely the outline of a pamphlet shortly to be published by the Executive Council. This explains why I have taken the extreme course of bringing the matter before a Board meeting. I do so because it is really a question of policy—of our attitude to Mrs. Destin and the N.C.S.R. The scheme is in effect one whereby intoxicating liquors could be sold in public houses only to workmen with tickets. These tickets would be supplied in a limited quantity by a committee in touch with each man’s employer: they would of course be cut down or withheld entirely in cases of over-indulgence. The system could be gradually extended to cover clothing and food—even amusements. So that wages would eventually be paid entirely in kind, and a guiding hand be thus kept on the lives of the working classes from birth to death—to the vast improvement of themselves in particular and the race in general.”

She had hardly seated herself before Thurlow jumped to his feet, pushing back his chair with such violence that it crashed over.

“I would like to remark,” he said, “that I am in entire disagreement with the principle underlying that scheme, and that so long as I remain editor of ‘The Beacon’ it will not find its way into the columns of that paper. . . .”

He expected an interruption, but not the one that

came. During the girl's brief speech, Poskett's antagonism to the well-dressed, well-fed folk around him had reached a point when it could no longer be endured in silence. He hardly understood what was being said, but he felt vaguely that vile treachery was afoot, treachery to him and his kind. The smile of that girl in her exquisite dress broadened until it became a ripple of malicious laughter spreading through the whole crowd of those in authority at the thought of their subtle conspiracy against a plain man's freedom.

He wriggled off his chair : his legs shook a little, but his voice was very loud, and he looked at the lady in the chair with an unwinking gaze.

" Did I understand the young lady that spoke just now "—he took pains to be very distinct—" to say that she had a plan for paying a man's wages in little tickets—tickets for coal, like, and meat and so on ? "

The chairwoman turned to him with a gently surprised air.

" Why, yes, something like that," she told him, breaking the instant silence.

Then she smiled at him with that peculiar graciousness that marks those smiles bestowed on plain men by their betters. If you do not belong to the down-trodden suffering people, you have never seen the faces of noble ladies sicklied o'er with that peculiar smile, and you cannot judge of its effect on Poskett.

It infuriated him. It stirred in him the feelings and

instincts that made a French Revolution. He would have shouted with joy at the sight of that gracious lady hanging from a lamp-post with her neck stretched out like a concertina. He was surprised at the calmness of his voice as he went on.

"And maybe a ticket for a picture palace—if you'd behaved yourself. And your beer tickets taken away if you hadn't, or if your boss had got a down on you. And you wouldn't have money to spend—not ever?"

"My dear man," a little annoyance sounded in the answer, "there is no difference really between wages in kind and wages in money. The only difference is that men won't be able to waste their money on drink and gambling while their families starve."

He caught her up fiercely. "And you'd be selling champagne in the clubs by ticket, I suppose, and paying your sons of dukes in tickets, so's they couldn't ruin themselves and poor tradesfolk by drink and gambling. Ow, you make me *sick*, you do." In his emotion Poskett's speech showed distinct traces of a return to dialect. He turned suddenly to a painting on the wall, flinging out his arms with a boldly dramatic gesture, a gesture he would have been delighted to see himself making. A young and already famous artist had painted it: a stretch of brown and purple moorland across which, like a god's spear, lay a streak of yellow gorse. It was the most arresting picture in the room.

"Look at that," he commanded them. "Look at

that, and look at them curtains, all gold and red and lovely, and look at that bowl, like a great yellow flower, it is, and full of flowers grown all out o' their time just to please the likes o' you. Here you've got them all—all the beautiful pictures of things, and you're wanting to take away from a man like me all chance of giving himself one such gift as you give yourselves any day of your lives. Would there be given tickets for yellow bowls—supposing my missus wanted to buy herself one, instead o' boots or bread or beer? But that would be wicked waste and self-indulgence." His tones were a savage travesty of the detested Miss Logan.

"And what would happen if a man took himself off for a week—or a month, maybe—to loaf round where them yellow bushes grow like they do in that picture? I suppose you'd cut off all his beer and picture palace tickets when he come back—to punish him, like. You that's got it all in pictures, and don't want maybe to go and look at it for yourselves. . . . You'd keep it all—pictures and real thing—all—you and your dirty tickets."

He thought that any moment the frozen vision at the table would rise and have him thrown out, and he swept on recklessly.

"And I'll tell you whether bits of pasteboard is as much to a man as a bit of money. When I was a lad and lived in a little town, there were two scavengers that found a sovereign among the rubbidge. They didn't rightly know which ashbin it had come out of,

so they kept it. They hadn't neither of them ever had a sovereign before. Really they were neither on 'em sure what it was, but they weren't going to let folk know that. So they went round to the shops, holding it out, and said—'There now, what'll ye gie us for that?' And t' grocer told 'em what he'd give, and the cobbler said what he'd give, and so on. They were a week doing it, and quarrelling about which they'd take : and a rare happy week it was for them. And in the end they took and drank it all in a night. They was looked up to for as long as I remember them—among the folks where they lived. For once in their lives they'd had money to spend like lords, and spent it like lords too."

With a little laugh Miss Logan interrupted him.

"You've given away your case in that very pretty little story. A sovereign wasted by two besotted fools that might have clothed two families."

At the sound of that little cool laugh, Poskett's reckless courage fled. It struck across him like a blast of cold air. It symbolised for him the gulf for ever fixed between him and these masterly-speaking, self-controlled people. He saw himself as an ill-dressed, unheroic figure, standing like a fool in the centre of a pink wilderness—talking like a fool—babbling, stuttering.

"Ow, you don't understand," he said. With a desperate appeal he turned to the group of men at the far side of the room.

“What I meant to say was this—that I’ve always thought that a man’s home ought to be a place where he can sit in his shirt sleeves and kiss his wife, and go to bed with——”

A gasp in the neighbourhood of the table arrested him. Old Redesdale’s voice struck across the pause, soothing and tactful. “Yes, yes, my good man, of course we understand you. . . .”

“No, you don’t,” he interrupted from the depths of his dejection, “maybe you’ve never wanted to go to bed——”

Redesdale waved a ponderous arm, and opened his mouth to silence the ill-bred little wretch once and for all. But Poskett, very near weeping, had started across the room : half-way to the door he stopped and faced desperately round—

“——to go to bed with your boots on or get drunk or black a man’s eye for him or do anything that takes any guts. You’re an—an antithesis, that’s what you are.”

His voice had risen almost to a shriek on the word. He disappeared through the door and clattered wildly down the stairs.

In the confusion Thurlow slipped away. He felt as irresponsibly guilty as a schoolboy caught in the act of transferring a mouse to his neighbour’s desk. He knew that he would never be pardoned for bringing the wretched Poskett to profane the mysteries, and he did not care at all.

The late afternoon found him at the offices of "The Beacon" writing at his articles on education. He was preparing to finish when Redesdale came in, and after watching him for a while in silence, began to talk on matters financial. Thurlow waited for a reference to the disastrous meeting of the morning, but none came. Instead, Redesdale took up the papers scattered on the desk and began without apology to read them through.

"This, you know," he said, when he had finished, "is far too sweeping a condemnation of elementary schools."

Thurlow glanced at him sharply. This was the first direct attack on his work. He felt instinctively that Redesdale had not struck his last blow.

"It is true, though, isn't it," he said, "that the number taught in one class—often sixty—is far too high? That it makes teaching a matter for a drill sergeant, and turns out the children of poorer classes uniformly mediocre, untrained to think for themselves, almost without initiative. And that such a state of things is fatal to the worker, and favourable to the slave-driver."

Redesdale tapped on the table with nervous fingers.

"Yes, yes, of course that's true enough, but you are alienating numbers of influential people by your candour. Candour can be purchased too dearly in the political world. Why not attack the system of Univer-

sity scholarships? You know that they are so utterly inadequate that very few can accept them who are not able to count on additional support."

"True, O King—but I thought we were fighting the working man's battles, and you know yourself that the proportion of working men's sons that would go to college is very small—no matter how adequate the scholarship."

"Well, and what of that?"

"Just this: that in spite of individual hardship, the state of University scholarships is a matter of no importance to the worker compared with the state of the elementary schools where the vast proportion of his class are trained in the way they should lick boots."

"I don't agree with you—oh, no, no—I don't agree with you." Redesdale moved uneasily about the room. "I consider those few men the genius of the working class."

"And you know how they treat their class when once they've stepped out of it?"

The sarcasm in Thurlow's voice pricked Redesdale into abrupt action.

"Well, I think, Mr. Thurlow, that on behalf of the Board, I must ask you to discontinue your articles on education."

Thurlow stared: his thoughts leaped to that young fool from college who would pay cheerfully for the joy of letters that began "To the Editor, Dear Sir." He felt

a moment's fierce anger at the thought of his year's slavery on a starvation wage, thus abruptly ended without gratitude or appreciation. Then an overwhelming and irrational relief swept it aside.

He grinned at the perspiring Redesdale. "Then edit your old rag yourself," he said. "You can begin now—and make it as depressing as—as Liverpool, with a style as flat and dull, and politics as filthy as a Liverpool street. I guess I've learned enough from you to make the drudgery worth while. I'll be here to-morrow to render an account of my stewardship." Then, with a touch of that pompousness peculiar to young men and peacocks, he added, "You may keep the salary, Redesdale, to buy a new chair for the new editor. He'll need it. That one's leg's—*gammy*."

He gathered up a bundle of papers and reached the door before Redesdale had summoned his dignity to reply that there was no salary due to an editor who flung down his pen on a second's warning.

At the door Thurlow paused, and searching among his papers, found one that he laid on the table. "There's the leader for next week's issue," he said, and went.

Thus lightly, with a laugh and a poor jest, he stepped down from the seats of authority. Impulse carried his feet to the near-by Embankment, and impulse decided his next proceeding, which was that of a lunatic. Some vision of a brief peace had been in his mind when he turned down towards the river: but he found the

broad pavement crowded with folk bound home in the brown dusk. He possessed a few shillings : he had lost his post, and he could have laughed aloud in his relief. An intolerable burden had fallen from him. He wanted to shout his joy in the faces of the passers-by. "No more Board Meetings, no more Redesdale." He stopped suddenly and stood gazing at the golden-bellied clouds above the setting sun. A wild ringing cry broke from him. Redesdale, who had followed him out of the office, was in time to see the leap that landed him on the parapet of the Embankment, and shaking with horror, to watch the slim black-clothed figure running madly along its perilous path, a figure that waved grotesque arms and laughed as it ran.

Authority bore down upon him from both sides. He jumped, ran across the road between two cars, wriggled, scratched and desperate; out of the arms of an elderly man with an umbrella, and disappeared up the dark archway leading to King's College. Before the policemen reached the Quadrangle of the college he was lost to sight in the blazing eddy of the Strand.

Redesdale stood and trembled, crushing in his hand the paper that Thurlow had left on the office table.

"He has been mad for God knows how long," he thought, and his brain reeled. "He might have murdered me in there just now." Mechanically he smoothed out the crumpled paper, and carried it

under a lamp to read. As he read, his fear was burned up in indignation, and his limbs ceased to shake.

It ran—

“ Oh, Tommy Dodd was a miner man,
And he lived in Barnsley village,
And when he wasn't shovelling coal
He was wont to drink and pillage.
*He drank champagne and overfed,
At least that's what the papers said.*

Chorus.

Oh, it's all my eye and Tommy Dodd
When he walks abroad o' Sunday.
But it's ' Mind what you're doing, you one-eyed sod !'
When he goes to work o' Monday.

Oh, Tommy Dodd had a heart that burst
For the miseries of the nation,
So he wriggled and preached till he became
The Chairman of his Federation.
*And there he stirred up ruin red,
At least that's what the papers said.*

Chorus.

Oh, it's all my eye and Tommy Dodd
When he walks abroad o' Sunday.
But it's ' Mind what you're saying, you slippery cod !'
When he goes to town o' Monday.

Oh, Tommy Dodd went to Parliament
To speak his comrades' wishes,
But once within he sat as mute
As a sprat among big fishes.
*And he'll get office some fine day,
At least that's what the papers say.*

Chorus.

Oh, it's all my eye and Tommy Dodd
When he talks up North o' Sunday,
But it's ' Mind what you're thinking, you mealy-mouthed clod !'
When he sits in the House o' Monday.”

CHAPTER IX

ATHENAIS broke with the Pioneers abruptly. Hartley, defying her unpopularity with his colleagues, had made her his sub-editor. She fought stubbornly to keep the position, but at the end of the sixth month of masked and open opposition, she announced rueful surrender. Hartley looked at her gloomily and offered an invitation. A quarter of an hour later they faced each other across the marble-topped table of a little café. Day after day for eighteen months they had worked in the dusty office of the "Pioneer": shared the same discouragements, topped the same wild hopes, gone hungry often, tired often. No other member of the paper's floating staff guessed at the weekly drudgery that kept it alive. No other member had shared it with Hartley. He made a wry face as he thought of the many days when their work seemed given for naught, and their words mere sand that the wind blew back again. The days would recur, but Athenais would not be there, sitting with her face framed in her hands, as she did always when their discouragement drove them to silent idleness. The pain that stabbed him was almost physical. It had always been she who broke the silence: she smiled, or made some jest over

whose weakness they both laughed, and work was again worth while.

"You've made up your mind." He stated a fact.

"Why, yes," she said. "You see yourself that it's no use. We made matters worse when you dubbed me sub-editor. As a member of your staff—your here-to-day-and-gone-to-morrow staff—I was irresponsible. I might be abused, but only you could refuse what I wrote. But as a sub-editor, who has quarrelled with all the money and made friends only with the ranks, I'm a—a festering sore, to quote the popular opinion of the 'Pioneer.'"

Her laugh held no trace of the bitterness with which she had spoken.

"Besides," she added, "I'm not altogether a success with the ranks. As a speaker at your meetings I'm a failure."

"You're too—too exact," he told her. "Your habit of clear short sentences is very well—excellently well in an article, but rottenly ineffective on a platform. But that didn't matter. They were keen to the point of enthusiasm over your economic stuff. If you could have suppressed your feelings about the social-work women we'd have had no trouble that you couldn't have laughed at."

"I can laugh at it, but I can't ignore it. After all, without those women and the ubiquitous, iniquitous Redesdale there would be no paper. Besides—there's

you. I believe they'd get rid of you if they couldn't get rid of me any other way."

"I'm not sure that one is any worse than the other. It's going to be damned dull. I've got used to you as I might have got used to working with another man, and it's none so often that you get hold of a man who'll understand what you're after with the first half word. . . . And you're so disgustingly cheerful. When you're tired you're cheerful, when you're hungry you're cheerful, when they got the better of you, you were cheerful, and when you got the better of them. I'll miss you."

The wandering eye roved forlornly round the café. It no longer amused Athenais : she had got used to it. She was, moreover, looking at the signs of exhaustion and strain on the sallow face.

"I've not gone altogether," she said, bending forward eagerly. "I'll write for you. Always. Anything you want. It's only that I'll have to send it through the post, or bring it along myself and lay it down on the table and just say, 'Here's something for you to read,' and hurry away for fear the bruised Redesdale is behind the door. Sometimes I shall stop and waste your time talking to you. Often."

He shook his head and smiled. "No," he said, "it won't do, Cousin Con, it won't do. You're gone for good, and I've a great mind to go too."

She considered the saying, her eyes searching his face.

"You would be sorry afterwards," she said, "you've—grown to the work."

"Are you calling me a dusty barnacle?" His annoyance was only half feigned.

Athenais smiled. She always smiled when she had no answer to a question. Hartley had not found that out and was satisfied. They were silent, each behind the impenetrable barrier of their thoughts.

"I couldn't leave it," he said at last, "I should probably go to pieces if I did. Or worse—my wife might find me."

"Have you a wife?" Athenais liked to think that she never shewed surprise. Nevertheless, she started irrepressibly at the name he gave.

"Your wife? Then your wife is—famous," she said.

He nodded. "She began to be a famous novelist before we had been married two years. The more famous she became, the more she was disappointed in me. She did all she could for me—arranged dinners where I met men and women well up in the political world. She had a genius for making friends with the right people. God knows why, but the right people and I disliked each other at sight. I left her when the position of husband to my wife became unbearable. I might have gone back: I was fond of her. But when I went she made me an allowance, and sent me notice of the fact through my best friend. I believe it still accumulates at her bankers. Of course that settled it. I couldn't go back."

The girl concealed a sudden pity that his cool words opposed.

"But—why should you be afraid she would find you? Doesn't she know you're here?"

"It seems incredible, but true it is that she doesn't know where I am. Of course, her friends are not the sort who come to Pioneer meetings or happen into the 'Pioneer' office. I believe she found that even a famous novelist may have a use for a husband. It wasn't that she wanted to marry again: I took pains to make sure of that." His control broke suddenly. "Damn it: don't let's talk about her. She was a cold-eyed fiend. I hope to God I never meet her again. I don't want to make a raving fool of myself."

"I wish you didn't work so hard," Athenais said abruptly.

He lifted his brows. "Good Lord, young woman, that comes well from you."

"It's not that, it's not that," she said, and then, conscious that her words had no meaning, stopped. She began again, but choked over the words, and put out her hands in a helpless gesture.

He leaned over the table and took them. "My dear," he said gently, "don't, my dear. Don't let yourself be sorry for me because I'm getting old—and looking it."

"I wish I was going to go on working with you."

Her sudden loss of control dismayed and horrified Athenais. She struggled wildly to regain it, and then

leaned back in her corner. She made no sound, but the tears ran down her face and splashed on to her locked hands.

The blood mounted slowly to Hartley's forehead. He leaned across the table, screening her from curious eyes, and his voice was hardly audible. "Thea." He stopped, and moved his head as if he were trying to free it from an entangling net. He knew that the greater part of her grief was for the sudden tearing away from the work into which had gone her freshest hopes and keenest life. Athenais did not know: he reminded himself feverishly of her youth. But he knew, and he had to remember for both.

"Athenais," he said cheerfully, "you're worn out. If you weren't you wouldn't weep to leave that disgraceful office where you can't swing even the skinny Pioneer cat."

He won. She sat up and rubbed her cheeks with an ink-stained handkerchief.

"I'm sorry," she said, and smiled. "You wouldn't have known I was an hysterical female, would you?"

He caught his breath at the well-known smile. Then he laughed softly.

"Next week you'll be wondering how you managed to stand it for so long," he said. Athenais shook her head and sat looking at the crowded café.

"Of course, it's not only those women who are driving me off the paper. If there had only been them I might have stood it a little longer. But there are

other things. There's so much shouting, just stupid shouting. Scrannel pipes scraping. And the blind tenacious bigotry of them. And the waste of money and energy on the Suffrage women—madness, just madness—as if the workers could afford either.”

He had his moment of blind anguish at the swiftness and completeness of her recovery. Then he caught her up and swept past.

“Do you think I don't see?” he said. “You know as well as I do that I don't believe in half I write and less than half I say. But there are times when you've got to shout, and people that have got to be shouted at. Good Lord, with the life some of them live, you'd not wonder they have to be lashed. The wonder is the spirit that they have—the queer unquenchable spirit. And that's got to be kept up. Don't you forget it : it's got to be kept up. Besides—and don't you make any mistake on this point—the pioneers of this movement are not the pioneers of to-morrow. A year, two years, three years—wait. Men that are doing men's work think the thoughts of men, and not of slaves, though they haven't all got the fluent tongue of our friend the intellectual Socialist. They are being taught and trained : they are teaching and training themselves. Before long we'll have such a body of clear thinking workers that we'll move mountains. Whole ranges of 'em.”

He stopped, and the excitement died in his eyes.

“Come,” he said, pushing back his chair. “Come,

you're tired. And mind, you don't go to that Stoke Newington meeting to-night on any account."

"But I thought you said you couldn't go?" she objected.

"Neither can I: so it may stay unreported. You are too tired to bother with it."

Outside the café she gave him her hand. "You see I do not say good-bye."

"No." He watched her walk away in the dead light before dusk.

Nevertheless, she went to the meeting, and left it with Henry Denarbon. He had grown shabbier and thinner during the past year. She thought that things must have gone harder with him than she had guessed, and cursed her helplessness.

"I don't think I want to sit in a bus after sitting in that place," she said.

"I was going to walk."

Not very sure of their way, they walked on through streets of little houses until one, turning sharply, brought them where the river Lea gleamed fitfully beneath a sombre sky. Beyond the unseen fields trains met and passed, crawling out of each other like clumsy glow worms: a goods train went clanking along its invisible length. Beyond these, beyond the sleeping poplars, stood sentinel the lights of Walthamstow.

"We are all wrong," Athenais said.

Denarbon nodded, but made no move to return, leaning against the low wall in front of them and

staring dumbly into the hollow darkness. Athenais kept silence faithfully. After a while she shivered involuntarily : he felt the movement and shook himself angrily.

“ Why didn’t you kick me ? ” he said, walking away so rapidly that for a time she could hardly keep pace with him.

“ I’d quite forgotten you, Thea. I was thinking.” . . . He paused and then began again. “ I can’t stand any more of this, Thea. I’m going to clear out of it. I can’t stop here and watch Henry Denarbon making a worse fool of himself every day. Besides, I’m sick of England and her puzzle-box fields, tired of all the sights and sounds of her, and damnably afraid for the future.” His voice shook with a weary excitement.

She sought for words and found none, bitterly aware of the cause of his misery,

He turned on her blindly. “ ‘ A whitely wanton with a velvet brow, with two pitch balls stuck in her face for eyes.’ I guess you knew what she was from the first. A woman would.”

“ Henry.”

She caught herself up sharply on the protest, but he had not heard her. He was talking to himself in broken phrases, storming at Julie, entreating her, living over again his struggles and humiliations as he must have lived them many times during the past months. They were in Kingsland Road now : in the blue light of the arc lamps he stumbled forward as one suddenly blind.

Once, his voice stopped on a smothered cry of anguish. Athenais bent forward to touch him, and drew away, helpless and almost ashamed. Yet the frustrate sympathy of her hands must have reached him. He was silent, and when he spoke again his voice was controlled and scornful.

"I am not enough of a fool to forgive my folly. The longer I stay here, the lower I shall sink. You see, I know her now and I don't leave her. But you don't think I *want* to crawl at her feet—at any woman's feet—to smile under her silly treachery. For she will betray me—sooner or later."

"But Henry—to leave England and your work. It isn't worth it, it isn't worth it."

"My work!" He flung back his head and laughed almost gaily. "My work, oh, my dear—it's another failure. I was a fool to think that I could storm Parnassus in two years, three years, four years—on half a meal a day and hope."

He laughed again with hardly a trace of bitterness.

"You'll give me your blessing before I go, Thea?"

"I won't," she said, harshly. "You ought not to go."

He stopped short and looked at her with a smiling affection. "But you will, all the same: you and I are too good friends—I care too much for you—to quarrel over a black-eyed harlot."

"It's your work. . . ."

He would hear nothing of entreaty or protest,

though she talked until they stood in Theobald's Road, using her wits desperately in the attempt to hold him. He laughed at her baffled silence : he shook his untidy hair back from his eyes and laughed again at her passionate speech.

" You ought to be thanking God that the fool has come to loathe his folly," he said, " not begging him to stay and wallow in it."

When she left him, he went straight to Hampstead and Julie.

She was waiting for him in the firelit room. He held her from him by the shoulders.

" I've failed, sweetheart, and I'm going."

" Going ? "

" To be a mining engineer in South Africa." He laughed at her angry flush, and then held her in straining arms. She clung to him with closed eyes, and limbs shaken with a barren passion.

" Don't go." Her voice was a vibrant whisper. " I love you more than ever before. Stay with me—safe."

" I shall not come back unless I win through."

" I will wait for you." She looked at the thin face until tears blurred her sight. " Oh, I will wait for you. I swear it, Henry."

She was entirely sincere.

He laughed softly. " Will you swear by your beard ? "

He took her in his arms again.

Towards dawn, between waking and sleeping, he stirred and cried out in unintelligible fear. She woke and bent over him, soothing him with an infinite tenderness, touching his hair and eyes with caressing fingers.

An hour later he stood for a moment looking down at her. Then he crossed the room and pulled back the curtains at the window. Under the brooding light of early dawn the roofs and spires of the city wavered before his eyes. He saw himself down there, a little figure in dusty overalls, playing with lumps of clay, torn absurdly by little desires. There was Thurlow, a tiny animated figure, gesticulating in a roomful of marionettes. He looked so queer with lips moving soundlessly that Denarbon stifled a laugh. The ripples ran widening outwards across England. Everywhere the same little figures, strutting, drooping, clutching each other, wagging heads, chattering, scurrying, moved by blind desires : some there were that crawled, bellies in the mud, crying, ' I climb, I climb ' : others that strove near the peaks, murmuring ' I fall, I fall ! ' Beneath the mask of grave decency he saw mean lust with hidden eyes : through degradation, as through a transparent veil, he looked at shame-faced charity. From the great cities streamed a ' darkness visible ' that reached to the little towns, once shut off and secure, now poor copies of the cities' follies ; filled once by strange, savagely individual folk, now with featureless beings apeing the cit. " Beastly silly little

lives," he stormed at the silent room. "All the outlines gone. All slopped over—life, music, art, literature—all a horrible mush. God ! what a silly game."

"Henry !" Julie's amazement woke him into sanity.

He reached her swiftly, and kissed the startled eyes until they burned sombrely.

Then he left her, and took a slow way through the echoing streets. The sun had not risen when he reached Waterloo Bridge. He stopped in one of the embrasures and stood looking at the wavering light beneath the shifting clouds. He spoke aloud. "I've failed : why ? Maybe I worked too hard, straining myself in the effort. Maybe I worked too honestly. I don't know. Lies, lies—life is a perilous structure of lies. We are tossed at random by lies. The truth kills. Man lies about love and success. If I had succeeded, I'd have deceived myself that my work was good. Man lies when he says that life is worth living : he could not live unless. So that the artist ought to be the arch liar—glorifying life. I have lied ineffectually. I am an ineffectual artist. A treacherous artist."

The oily ripples splashed against the arches of the bridge. Denarbon walked rapidly towards Tenison Road.

CHAPTER X

A MAN stood under the lights of Charing Cross station, and looked idly down the white river of the Strand, rippling and swirling into fantastic eddies like human faces. Passed a girl with sagging mouth and shadowed eyes, a woman of aggressive body and watchful beckoning gaze, passed youth vacuous, youth earnest, youth defiant, youth leaden-eyed and pale, age crook-backed, age lustful, age withered, passed the seven dull sins, the many indifferent virtues, passed riches preposterous, and dumb poverty.

"Only fools could suppose that Life had reached its final form in—these." The man was walking away when his name was called from behind. "Norden!"

He turned so sharply that the breathless speaker walked violently into him.

"Man—you look as if the police were on your heels."

Thurlow laughed. "Why so they are, but I don't think they'll know me again."

"They'd know you again if they've seen you lately. Your hair is as tempestuous as a lyrical petticoat; you look rather as if you'd been dragged through a hedge backwards. Where did you scratch your cheek?"

“ Caught it on Cleopatra’s Needle. Don’t you think you’d better come quickly ? ”

In the comparative gloom of Trafalgar Square they stopped and looked back. There was no chase, and they walked slowly towards the Haymarket.

“ I was just running away from ‘ The Beacon,’ ” Thurlow explained.

“ Are you running on a tether ? ”

“ No. I’ve left them. They made it impossible for me to do anything else. . . . For some time they have only been waiting for some other fool to turn up for the place.”

“ A fool all right,” Norden said drily. “ You were certainly unique among editors : did you dust the office yourself ? If you didn’t it would be the only thing you didn’t do.”

Thurlow became outrageous—

“ I was the Perfect Editor,
The democratic Editor,
The handmaid of the Beacon,
Though I do not think they said it or
Implied it.
Whether it was to my credit or
Otherwise, I fed it for
A year and it grew sleek on
My devotion though they fled it or
Decried it.”

Norden gathered patiently that Thurlow was penniless, and for the moment resourceless. He reflected hurriedly, and then suggested that Thurlow should leave England with him.

"I go next week. In a way I can't do much for you. But I can give you the chance to do something for yourself, which is what you want. I have friends in odd places: I can promise you a place on the staff of one paper in Moscow or another in Warsaw. I might—this time—end up in Constantinople. I could do something for you there . . . if you are rash enough to come."

He was sincere in his wish to help the other man out, but a strain of malice inherent in his nature prompted the last words of the offer. Possibly he had also a lurking distrust of Thurlow as one of the intelligentsia of whose failure in Russia he had been a bitter and contemptuous witness.

Thurlow flushed and shook his head. "It's very good of you. I am grateful, though I can't accept your offer."

The loneliest thing in the universe is the human thought.

Norden said nothing and thought: You're no Antony, my friend, but I wonder just how long your middle class Cleopatra will make up to you for the comparative poverty and monotonous life that would appear to be imminent for you.

Thurlow said again. "I would have liked to go. . . ." And thought for a moment of a street of great white houses. "Wild honey and the East and loveliness." The words and the wandering image faded, and with them the moment's regret. His mind leaped

exulting into the years ahead: there would be his work, new desire, and new vision. He saw Thea leaning against the black trunk of a blossoming cherry: the white petals lay on her dark hair, she was talking, debating, explaining: a paper slipped from her hand and blew across the white-tipped lawn.

They were in Piccadilly Circus before Norden broke the silence. "Brinton's back," he said. "Did you know?"

"Why, yes," the younger man answered. "I met his train on Tuesday. I've seen him two or three times since. I was on my way to look him up to-night."

They went together to Gerrard Street, and ten minutes later were seated in an obscure corner of a French café.

"You didn't tell me that Carey was separating from his wife," Brinton said abruptly.

Thurlow hesitated. "No. To tell the truth, I've not been near Carey for so long. Mrs. Elsa got on my nerves. I only heard gossip until quite lately. There's still plenty of gossip, but no one story. *He* says nothing. . . . And the women have closed round her. Don't know what she told 'em, but it's a sort of watch-word with them to believe in the poor lady. . . . Scratch your eyes out if you hint at scepticism."

"The pity is that he didn't leave her before," Norden added. "It's too late now to save him. Have you

seen him ? He's broken up—all at once—in a horrid fashion. Past anyone's help."

"She took good care he had no excuse to leave her before," Thurlow said savagely. "She was one of your *ce que vous voulez mais pas ça* females. I wonder how she came to give him the chance he's taken ?"

"He didn't want the chance, poor chap."

"And the child, the little girl ?"

"He's keeping her. At first we were afraid he was going to let her go, devoted to her though he was. He had some sort of fool theory that the child belongs to the mother by unalienable right. It took him some time to see that it would be an unpardonable sin against the poor little thing to let that woman have it to neglect or indulge as she pleased. Then he made it the condition of a peaceful separation."

"She had the soul of a peacock and the morals of a rabbit. How did modern society come to breed her kind ?"

"She wasn't bred : she existed." Norden spoke viciously. "I've met her kind in the Balkans and in Turkestan. Of course her barbarian sisters didn't talk about spiritual independence or indulge an art mania, but they were the same sort of dirty little animals for all that. Scratching themselves." His glance wandered round the café, resting on bare heaving shoulders and flushed faces.

"All the same," he went on, "civilisation has perfected a woman to whom spending is a fine art—a

delicate, exquisite thoroughbred : an army of people pass their lives grooming and adorning her : she may be brainless or cultured, complacent or restless : always she is useless and helpless, even in her occasional attempts at work. She is greedy—consciously or unconsciously—taking with both hands.”

“Feminine greed,” Brinton said idly, “has wrecked many a fine scheme. How do you know she won’t wreck the fine new State of your dreams ? What will you do with her fragile ladyship ? ”

“Nothing.” Thurlow considered. “Nothing. You can’t do anything with her. Independence—so called—is too hard for her. She has all the independence she can bear. Probably we shall pass her by—just leave her—like a withering branch on a flourishing tree.”

“She’ll give you more trouble than that,” Norden said, “she belongs to the biggest family in the world—the family of those who take. The distinction runs through the whole human race : some give, the others take.”

“No other kind ? ”

“No other. Everywhere the same. In literature, in art. Look at sculpture : the Greeks took, the Egyptians gave. The Apollo Belvidere is a magnificent copy of man’s strength, noble and graceful. The finest Egyptian statue is not represented in the Museum here : but there is Amen Hetep III to serve me for instance. The architect of that took the human form and gave back to the world an eternal type, a symbol of self-

contained strength and dignity. Music? What is the difference between Wagner and Beethoven, but the difference between a taker and a giver? A Wagnerian opera drains the defenceless listener of emotion and will: strength and serenity are the gifts of the Master. In life . . . Cæsar was a giver: the modern politician is a thief. . . . Denarbon—ah! He is a thwarted giver. He desires—labours to give, but his strength is failing him—if it has not already failed him. He had not enough: he has robbed and exhausted himself. . . .”

“Don’t,” Thurlow said sharply. “You’re a damned cold-blooded vivisector.” He covered his brief anger with a careless question. “What will you say of me?”

“You,” the speaker glanced at Thurlow, “you? You take. You do not create, but you take created things and think about them. Perhaps you play with them and let them drop: perhaps you destroy them. Ultimately you are an honest thinker: you have a value. . . .”

“Thank you.” Thurlow’s laugh was without resentment. “And the iconoclast has his uses—and his time. I believe that his time is here and now. The place is too full of false images for there to be room for rebuilding yet. They’ve got to be destroyed. That is my work. I can’t build up, but I can pull down to make room for the men who can.” The speaker smiled ruefully. “I’ve lost my old hammer,” he said, turning to Brinton, “they’ve taken ‘The Beacon’ from me.”

“I’m not sorry,” Brinton said briefly.

"I'm not sorry to be rid of that ghastly crew, but I am sorry to have lost my paper just when I was beginning to use it as a new broom."

Norden waved a lean hand. "There was once a very young and inquisitive devil who borrowed a broom from the doorkeeper of Hell and went to sweep the world into confusion. He returned almost immediately, disconsolate, with a broken wing, and threw down the ruined weapon. "You can have that thing," he said bitterly. "On earth they make their own confusion with brooms driven by the most powerful machinery."

"And the machines have been turning it out ever since," Thurlow flung at him. "With machines came the doctrine of individualism, and the cry that all men are equal. Equal? Not even the modern democrat suggests that they are equal in valour or nobility of character, or intellect or imagination. Nor are the higher qualities of soul and spirit encouraged in the mass of men: the ruling class don't want 'em. They prefer to assist at the glorification of the little man, the cautious man, the submissive slave. And at the same time they encourage the stupid anarchy that leads each man to believe he is as good as his neighbour and would be better if he had the chance. That is where the glorifiers of the individual have led us—to the silly chaos where statesmen struggle to steer a way between the commands of the man with the money and the aimless pressure of the mob with nothing but unsatis-

fied needs. And in the end, the state is arranged to suit the schemes of merchants, the very men who were once the state's servants. And everywhere is disorder, men who starve in the sight of food, men who go naked before stacks of clothing, men who freeze to death on the other side of warm rooms." He stopped. "Like this one," he said, pricked by a sudden consciousness of luxurious comfort.

"Go on, old man," said Norden softly, "you don't overfeed as a rule."

ThurLOW drew his brows together and went on with a subdued emphasis that struck across the excited chatter of a group of young men at the nearest table. They listened, furtively and then openly.

"The problem for the reformer is not the curing of a hundred or so evils—with little or no connection—but the right understanding of the confusion. That *first*, before any attempt to clear it up.

"Chaos. Some things have progressed too far and too fast. Machinery is one such thing. That the women are also rushing on without thought is clear enough from their idiotic statements that women should be in factories for the good of their health. And women working in the mills up to a few weeks before child-birth! Fine progress of the race!

"And on the other hand, some things have been left far behind. Education for one. Religion. Still the old sects, snarling at each other and each other's gods. The Quakers, meditating on an Inner Light——"

“ Which bids fair to be quenched in the rising tide of cocoa.” Norden was guiltily inaudible.

“ The Dissenters, still holding to their ideal of a beefy old God with a long beard. The anthropomorphic ideal cracks in every direction, but there is none fit to take its place.

“ What would you do ? What would you have done with ‘ The Beacon ’ ” ? Brinton was playing on an invisible chessboard with a wine glass for a pawn.

“ Disentangle all the threads. So far as any one man could. Throw lights out over the chaos. Show it as a chaos. Compel people to stop and think, to go back to the beginning of the panic rush. And think, think. Think whether they are moving or only whirling round in the same place. Think whether they may not have been hymning a false dawn.

“ Of course there is more—far more than that to do—more than mere destruction and obstruction. And, mind you, there is already a change. Just as the worship of the individual has led to a false democracy, so the growth of a communal spirit leads to a hierarchy. And the communal ideal revives. You may see it in the unions of the men and in the unions of the masters. As yet it is unconscious, torn by jealousies and distrusts. It must become conscious or perish. I’m not thinking of any stupid share-and-share-alike idea : when I talk of the communal faith I mean by it an ideal of common service. Men must be allowed to give of their best to the service of a State wherein the

plutocrat is no longer supreme. The whole scale of values waits readjustment. Machinery must be the servant of man : quantity of production give way to quality. The labourer become craftsman, the craftsmen organisers and rulers of their crafts : every craft and every profession the servant of the State. Men that were merely inhabitants become citizens."

" You do well not to try building." Norden interrupted drily. " There's holes in your wall that a man on a galloping horse would see. And you've been sparing with the mortar. . . ."

A young man leaned across from the near-by table and laid a hand on Thurlow's arm.

" And where do we artists come in your beautiful new state ? "

Thurlow looked at the nervous twitching face of the speaker.

" God bless my soul," he said, " what does it matter where you come in ? The great artists will be great artists still, I suppose : the second and third rate ones will find plenty to do as artistic craftsmen : and as for those of you who are too bad to know that you are bad, you may go to the devil and paint portraits of city councillors condemned to Hell for trafficking in the rates." He raised his voice above the indignant outcry. " And the State won't be the decrepit hag it is now. It will be a new State, organised by thinkers and workers, leaders who lead, autocrats of the Spirit, and not by muckrakers. It will be worth serving : there

will be no waste, no mad overproduction, the riot of anarchic capitalists, bent on outdoing the Kilkenny Cats. A temple not made with hands." He stopped and laughed. "It is as you said, oh, Wisdom of the East, there would be sad holes in my temple. I had better stick to iconoclasm."

Brinton bent across the table.

"You'll make a good enough iconoclast," he said. "I have an offer to make you. Could you run a paper? A weekly review perhaps—and find good men to help you?"

Thurlow's answer came swiftly. "I could begin to-morrow."

Brinton leaned back.

"There's no need for a blind rush into chaos," he said, quietly malicious, "but if you will create and edit 'THE ICONOCLAST,' I will back its debts." He smiled. "I'm not financing you: your salary would depend upon yourself. Say that it was fixed at twenty per cent of the sales . . . a weekly sixpenny. . . ."

"Are you serious?"

"My dear Richard!" The struggling radiance on the thin face hurt him queerly. Among all the thousands of his kind Thurlow was the only one he could touch and help.

"Why are you doing it?" The strained voice freed the sharp question from discourtesy.

"Perhaps to amuse myself."

"And if it ever came to paying its way?"

"Then it would be yours in fact as well as in spirit. You understand that I have no wish to interfere with the paper in any way. You mustn't bother me with it. I might read it. . . ."

At the sound of Brinton's low laugh Thurlow sat up sharply.

"I take the offer, of course," he said. "It's incredibly good of you. . . ."

"Then by the staff of the god let us have no more social economy. You've spoilt a good dinner between you—you and Norden. Graves, worms, epitaphs—anything you like—but that."

An hour later Thurlow left the other two in Brinton's rooms.

Norden looked after him with a gleam of mockery in his smile.

"You've saved the hero and spoiled the story. Where did you come by your faith in him?"

"He's an excellent doubter," Brinton said. "He will make a keen and vigilant critic."

"A kind of watchman on the ramparts of labour?"

"You sneer. Your experiences in Russia have given you a harsh opinion of the intellectuals. They may not be able to construct. Richard Thurlow isn't, and he knows he isn't. But they're like a frost—they break up the ground. . . ."

The mockery died in Norden's eyes. "I wish him luck," he said, with a new bitterness in his voice.

Brinton watched the darkening eyes. "It is seven years since I made you the same offer," he said.

"You made it a year too late," the other answered harshly. "Mary and the boy had been dead eight months."

"Norden, you fool. Why was it you didn't write to me in time?"

"To beg for charity? What sort of a man would I be, to ask help with the burden of my folly from the friend who had warned me against the folly? You told me that an elementary school teacher had no right to marry an educated gently-bred girl. I had ninety pounds a year when I began." He laughed, looking down into the shadowed street.

"You might have saved your wife's life."

"It is possible. But she died of diphtheria, not of poverty."

"Poverty made her more likely to die of it."

Norden turned savagely from the window. "Why in God's name are you dragging it all up now? Do you think I wasn't punished enough during those ghastly five years? She wasn't happy for more than six months. Music, books—she loved both, and we could afford neither. Then the boy came. She ought to have had help after that—help with the day's work. We couldn't afford it. She struggled on, working, nursing—no holiday away from the hideous, dusty little street. She wouldn't go home because they had forbidden the marriage. Oh, she was game, Mary

was. . . . It broke her,—she began to cry at night because she was tired—sometimes because she was hungry—sometimes because she was starved of the little pleasures I couldn't give her. Night after night I left her in alone—crying—and tramped round the streets, because I couldn't stand the monotonous wail. When she got diphtheria from the boy and died twenty-four hours after he did, I was glad. They laid her on her bed with the boy nestled in one arm—white, content. I looked at them—I thought how I had begun to hate her for her tears, even while I would have died to save her them. . . . I killed her. I took her and killed her. . . .”

Brinton turned his eyes from the tortured face.

CHAPTER XI

MARGARET looked round the white-panelled room on the people she had gathered there. It was the most troublesome gathering of the month. In the alcove of a bay window a group of her young intellectuals quarrelled politely with three older women who belonged to the Executive Council. Two Labour leaders who had been avoiding each other with extraordinary care had met unexpectedly and stood bristling in the centre of the room. Everywhere were small groups of people who refused even to pretend a tolerance of one another. Margaret sighed wearily, and looked towards the door. Then she caught a fragment of the conversation round one of the tiny tables and moved nearer.

"My dear," Miss Logan lifted a slim hand, "my dear—he is unspeakable. A brute. Mary Dorchester actually spoke to him about it: she said she couldn't bear to see Elsa's misery. She asked him whether he did not think he ought to come to a fairer settlement of their differences, and let Elsa have the child."

"Well?" The delicate face of the questioner burned.

"He shrugged his shoulders in her face, and said that the matter was not one for discussion!"

"The beast ! How could Elsa have endured him !"

"Mary lost her temper at that and told him that as they were separating, and at Elsa's wish, he had not even a legal right to the child. He smiled, and suggested that if she wished for any information on the whole question she should get it from Elsa."

A third voice cut across the babble of indignation.

"Oh, the man is quite heartless. Elsa says he told her that if she claimed the child, he would realise every penny he possessed, and go off to Central Africa with it, and she might send her solicitors there for her maintenance money : and in any case, of course, she shrinks from dragging things through the Courts. She cried and cried when she told me, and said that she would have refused his degrading money and worked for her living if she had had only half the strength. She looks dreadful. . . . I kept thinking of a flower beaten by the rain when I looked at her. . . ."

"She told Janet that she had endured her life with him only for the sake of little Marthe, and that she only gave in when she could endure it no longer. Ever since they were married he has sneered at her work, insulted her friends, and refused her the most elementary freedom."

A slender woman set down her cup with an angry gesture : Margaret shivered in expectation of a crash. It did not come, and the fragile little creature swept into denunciation.

"It is scandalous that a woman of fine nature and

sensitive soul should be tied irrevocably to a thick-skulled brute—brute or fool—he might be either. She ought to have been able to divorce him without question—years ago. I hope he may pay for his narrow-souled cruelty. He has killed the best years of her life. . . . Mrs. Destin, what do you think of the tragedy ? ”

ThurLOW and Athenais came into the room, and Margaret turned to greet them, glad to have evaded the question.

“ Margaret madonna, come into an empty corner, and we will tell you what made us so late.”

“ Well ? ” she said, her eyes resting tenderly on the grave face and shining eyes. “ The excuse ? ”

“ We were married, Richard and I—this afternoon : it took longer than I had thought. . . . ”

“ Ah ! ” For a moment Margaret had thought for nothing but her unbearable pain : why had they not told her of it ? They must have known she would want to be there. Thea, her little Thea, married, and she told of it, lightly, as they might tell a casual friend. She looked dizzily round the room, her hand at her throat. The cultured voices of her guests jarred and stabbed.

Athenais had looked for reproach and bewilderment at their haphazard way of marriage. She had not expected to give pain. The ceremony had counted for so little to them : a form that had to be gone through much as one obtained passports on the continent. Even now she only half understood the grief of the woman before her. Instinctively, she ignored it.

"I knew you wouldn't want to be there, Margaret, sweetheart—it was in a registry office. Mr. Norden and Mr. Brinton witnessed it."

"Thea!" The older woman was sincerely shocked. Athenais laughed softly. "You see," she said, "you're horrified. Now—suppose I'd told you—you'd have come and been miserable over the bareness of it all. I did spare you that."

"Oh, my dear, why did you? A registry office, it's—sordid."

Athenais began a protest only to abandon it. "I could never make you understand," she said; "you must forgive me and just think that I don't deserve forgiveness."

"You are duly forgiven," Margaret said quietly, and smiled. The sharpness of her grief was taken away by the very carelessness of the two before her.

"We couldn't have stood a Church ceremony," Thurlow said.

"Oh, don't." Margaret put out protesting hands. "Spare me that. I know all the formula of the unconventional marriage. . . ." She laughed gently. "What do you do now?"

"We are going home," said Athenais. "Home to the sea. When we come back, I am going to write Richard the most brilliant articles in his paper, and supply him with statistics, and rope in for him the best man of my year at the School of Economics. Also I am going to make a home for him and take care of him. Not that I shall stop in a wall-papered bandbox.

I'm going to get out of it—and get other women out of theirs. . . .” She regarded Thurlow with a whimsical defiance. “I will kiss you in front of all these people,” he said gravely, “if you look at me like that.” The girl flushed beneath his glance.

Margaret persisted. “But where are you going to have your bandbox—while you do have it?”

“I don't know,” Athenais admitted. “I only know that it will be outside this relentless city, and that it is going to have one extravagance in it—a telephone. So that when I am at home I will know whether Richard comes home or stays in town for a while. You are laughing at me, Margaret. But the fact that we are married is no reason why we should be stuck together like freak twins, eating side by side, sleeping side by side, sitting in the same room in a kind of congealed domesticity. We don't want to—to welter in each other.” She stopped abruptly, and gave way to a laugh of irrepressible delight. “Please don't look so pained, dear Margaret. You think that I am talking like the most blatant of problem plays.”

Thurlow stooped and kissed her hair. “That is just what you are doing,” he said, “and you deserve your punishment.”

Margaret intervened. “To-morrow perhaps, or the next day, I shall realise that you are married. Just now I'd rather not have to think about it. Tell me—I want a fresh design for the cover of the Year Book. Would Mr. Denarbon care to do it? You remember

that he has done two for me and both were successful."

"Oh, Margaret, he's gone. We couldn't keep him. After all his hard work and terrible, terrible struggle."

"Gone? Gone where, dear?"

Thurlow answered for her. "I had a note yesterday afternoon from him: it came at four o'clock and said that he would have sailed at three for the Danish West Indies. He gave the name of the ship: we found out which dock she sailed from, and went there on the chance that she hadn't gone. Sure enough, she was still there, not moving out until midnight. Henry was standing at the head of the gangway, and rushed down when he saw us on the quay."

"He'd been expecting us when the ship didn't sail." Athenais interrupted.

"But why the Danish West Indies?" Margaret frowned her bewilderment.

"He saw an advertisement for a teacher in the Government school at St. Thomas. He applied for the post and got it. There were only two men in for it, and the other man didn't turn up to see the Consul. Henry said: 'It was a pity for him that he didn't, for he'd certainly have got the job. . . .' He seemed quite happy though. They'd paid him his passage out first class and he swore he was looking forward to the West Indies. New colours, he said, new skies, new stars. . . . He said also," Thurlow added, "that the nigger often had a magnificent torso and would make a great model."

"But why has he gone? I don't understand. It is only last spring that I went with two famous critics—Frenchmen—to the exhibition of British Sculpture, and they picked out his work as the most promising of all the younger men's."

Athenais flung out her hands in a gesture of fierce indignation.

"He was starving, Margaret. All he had to live on was the money he got from black and white sketches, and that was desperately little. We couldn't help him: what help we could give, he refused. But we didn't know until to-day how terribly he struggled. For more than two years he has lived on a meal a day—he had not always that. Oh, it makes me angry—to think that there was no help for him. He was worth saving. Why wasn't there a guild of artists and craftsmen who would have been responsible for him? Look at all the hideous, monstrous sculpture on the public buildings—and Henry, an artist if ever there was one, is starved out of the country. . . ."

"I wonder," Margaret considered the vehement speech, "whether artists as a whole are worth saving to a State. . . . I'm truly sorry for Mr. Denarbon," she added instantly. "I would have done anything I could if I had but known."

"Henry was worth saving," Thea persisted, "any good craftsman would be. Suppose there was an Arts and Crafts guild where one would apply for men to work on all public buildings and mansions——"

"Athenais," said Thurlow hastily, "you shall write an article on the matter in 'THE ICONOCLAST.'"

Athenais smiled and sighed. "But to think of him all these months, eating his heart out in that studio, working and despairing and working again. Oh, it doesn't bear thinking of. . . ."

"He had other troubles than starvation," Thurlow said. His glance rested for a moment on a girl sitting in the corner of a wide recess—her sombre, elfin face framed in the folds of a barbaric curtain. Margaret's husband stooped to put a cushion behind her head: his touch on her shoulders was a caress, and he smiled down at her with an insolent mastery. Thurlow controlled a desire to laugh aloud. "Henry on his way to the West Indies, and Julie here purring like a damned cat before a fire." On the heels of the thought came remembrance that Margaret stood beside him. He turned his eyes hastily from the absorbed pair, lest she should follow the track of his glance.

Athenais was saying softly. "Shadows in other men's plays. We have been nothing else—so far."

"You did not stay long in my play," Margaret said quietly. "And it is a great play: you might have made your name known through Europe—wherever mine is known."

The girl shook her head and smiled.

"Keep my name in your heart, madonna mia: I shall be content."

EPILOGUE

WHITBY

THEY stood on the treacherous cliff path and looked back to the beloved town. Dusk had slipped from the east as they climbed upward past the stooping houses to immemorial graves, starkly slender in the shadow of the church. The dead gold of an autumn sunset wavered and went out : heavy clouds swept the dying light. Darkness, peering over the rim of the sea, topped the ribbed waves and rested on the shoulders of the cliffs. In the murmuring shadows of the little town lights gleamed like fallen petals. Beyond the old dockyard scattered lights clung to the hillsides : far up the valley a single light marked the turn of the road that twisted to the moors, and on the quiet waters of the upper harbour the boats were slender shadows in the chequered dusk.

Walking slowly, her head resting against his shoulder, they left behind the starry town above the tranquil harbour. Behind them lay dim stretch of barren fields. Here was the cliff's rim, and beyond it the sea swept to the stooping sky. Out in the darkness, waves, dimly stirring, drew on into the gleaming shadows below the rocks.

Athenais looked back. "Once," she said, and

smiled to herself, "once I made a poem of my beautiful town. Will you hear it?"

"If it is very short, beloved of my heart."

Now there be streets in Paradise
 Made smooth for angels' feet,
 And trancéd roads in Haute Savoie
 Where faun and satyr meet.
 But I will sing the moor road
 That Viking's son and Roman strode,
 The cobbled streets that meet the sea
 And climb remembered cliffs: these be
 The streets of my desire.

The wind that blows through Paradise
 Is as a quivering wing,
 The faery winds of Avignon
 Unloose no bud of spring.
 But I will sing of ice blast,
 Of riven sea and snapped mast.
 Through sucking hills and cliffs leap,
 And over crouching moors sweep
 The winds of my desire.

The folk that walk in Paradise
 No envy get of me,
 Nor they who heard in Sicily
 The songs of Arcady.
 But I will leave my narrow bed
 And fling the green clothes off my head
 And let accustomed feet go down
 The narrow streets of one small town,
 Fair town of my desire."

The clear voice ended. He kissed her gravely on eyes and hair and mouth.

"It was not very short, nor very bad," he said. She rested in his arms, silent. Was not her foot once more on the beloved soil, and the strength of her lover round her like a mantle?

Life whispered to them through the darkness, stole from the shadows of the hills, swept laughing down the sea. Athenais stirred, and flung out her arms to the hidden verge of rocks. "Shadows in other men's plays." Her words came broken and strange above the crash of the sea. The man's answer was not for her alone. "Now it is to be our play—for always and always."

They turned back to the graveyard and the shifting lights beyond.

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD
PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND

OH! MONEY, MONEY

6s. net

By Eleanor H. Porter

With Frontispiece in Colour

Stanley Fulton was a bachelor and a multi-millionaire. What was to become of his fortune after his death? In order that he may discover the answer to this problem during his life-time, he arranges to disappear from the world leaving 100,000 dollars to each of three distant cousins, among whom he then reappears as plain John Smith, in which rôle he watches the results of his experiment and learns many interesting things concerning the significance and effects of money. It is a happy, wholesome story, and the theme affords full play for Mrs. Porter's gift of sympathy with an understanding of the ways of human life.

THE ROAD TO UNDERSTANDING

5s. net

With Frontispiece in Colour

"Told with an excellently human and sympathetic understanding, upon which I make my cordial congratulations to Eleanor H. Porter."—*Punch*.

"Deeply moving and sympathetic. It will be a pearl of great price to a reader in quest of a pure and simple love story."—*Globe*.

"It is a very human and charming little love story that Eleanor H. Porter tells in her own inimitable and wholly delightful way."

Lady's Pictorial.

JUST DAVID

With 8 Illustrations

5s. net

"An altogether delicious book."—*Evening Standard*.

"An idyll as perfect as a fairy story."—*Globe*.

"This delightful story."—*Scotsman*.

"It is a real work of art, a beautiful story beautifully told and illustrated."—*Great Thoughts*.

Published by **CONSTABLE & CO. Ltd.**

10 Orange Street

London W.C. 2

ANNE'S HOUSE OF DREAMS

By L. M. MONTGOMERY

Author of "Anne of Green Gables," "Anne of Avonlea," etc.

6s. net

Anne Shirley, Miss Montgomery's lovable heroine, has given delight to a host of readers. Anne in her house of dreams will delight as many more, and so will all the various characters who become her friends and neighbours at Four Winds—brave honest old Captain Jim, sharp-tongued and warm-hearted Miss Cornelia, Leslie Moore with her beautiful face and tragic history, Owen Ford the novelist, and last but not least Anne's husband, the brilliant young doctor, who proves that modern surgery can incidentally mend troubles of the heart as well as of the body. It is a story full of tears and laughter and of warm human kindness, and it is written with all the whimsical grace and humour that Miss Montgomery's readers have grown to expect of her.

THE WAY OF THE WIND

By E. B. FROTHINGHAM

With Frontispiece in colours by C. E. Brock.

5s. net

"The Way of the Wind" is a story with an age-long appeal. It tells how, after many trials and tribulations, the love of a noble and steadfast woman saves the soul of the boy she loves—a boy of a passionate and beauty-loving nature who finds it impossible to run straight upon the lines prescribed for him by the austere and unimaginative elder sister upon whom he is dependent. Apart from the interest and charm of the story itself, Miss Frothingham gives vivid descriptions of the New England scenery in which the story is laid and of life in a wealthy New England country house.

Published by **CONSTABLE & CO. Ltd.**

10 Orange Street

London W.C. 2

IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE

By Mrs. George Wemyss

Author of "The Professional Aunt" 6s. net

To Mrs. Wemyss we already owe a whole gallery of delightful people, but none are more delightful than John and Joanna, the impossible people who are the soul of her new book. There is a love story as well, and John and Joanna have a great deal to do with it, as they have to do with the lives of all the folk who have the good fortune to live in that delightful village of Up and Down. It is a story full of kindness and humour and of delicate characterisation of grown-up people and children, for which many will be grateful in these war-time days.

OTHER NOVELS BY MRS. WEMYSS

THE PROFESSIONAL AUNT 5/- net

Illustrated by BALLIOL SALMON

PRISCILLA 5/- net

Illustrated by BALLIOL SALMON

PETUNIA 5/- net

JAUNTY IN CHARGE 5/- net

A LOST INTEREST 5/- net

Illustrated by BALLIOL SALMON

GRANNIE FOR GRANTED 5/- net

With Frontispiece by HAROLD COPPING

PEOPLE OF POPHAM 5/- net

Illustrated by BALLIOL SALMON

Two delightful books for Children

ALL ABOUT ALL OF US

THINGS WE THOUGHT OF

With Frontispiece in colour. 1/- net each

Published by **CONSTABLE & CO. Ltd.**

10 Orange Street

London W.C. 2

GUDRID THE FAIR

By Maurice Hewlett.

6s. net

The history of Gudrid the Fair is founded upon two actual Scandinavian sagas. It is the story of a very noble and beautiful woman and at the same time it is the story of the discovery of America and the exploration of Greenland by early Icelandic voyagers. It is a tale of courage and endurance and of simple but very deep emotions, and it is told with all that marvellous intensity of vision, that richness of colouring and of picturesque detail, with which Mr. Hewlett can so magically recreate other days and other ways of life and living. It has all the stark vigour of the sagas lit up with the glow and romance of human life and adventure.

THE ANCHOR

By M. T. H. Sadler, Author of "Hyssop" 6s. net

In "The Anchor" Mr. Sadler takes up the story of Laddie MacAlister, whom readers of "Hyssop" will remember as playing a prominent part in that story. Then he was an Oxford undergraduate. Now we find him flung into the whirlpool of life and literary work in London. His experiences there, and his adventures with the various men and women with whom he is brought into contact are described with the same insight and sincerity, the same blend of realism and idealism, which distinguished "Hyssop." It is a vivid and powerful story of modern life, and in Janet, through his love for whom Laddie is brought to safe anchorage at last, the author has created a heroine of rare freshness and charm.

Published by **CONSTABLE & CO. Ltd.**

10 Orange Street

London W.C. 2

A Powerful Story of India

KING, OF THE KHYBER RIFLES

By TALBOT MUNDY

With 8 Illustrations.

5s. net

"He makes the reader feel the terrors he describes, and by the sheer energy of the telling he carries him along to a most fitting climax."—*Times*.

"This novel stands in a class apart with one other work, Rider Haggard's immortal 'She,' whose peculiar spell of feminine charm, barbaric force and mystical history it wields again."—*Globe*.

JAN: SON OF FINN

By A. F. DAWSON

Author of "Finn, the Wolfhound"

Frontispiece in colour and 20 Illustrations by G. D. ARMOUR
Large Crown 8vo.

6s. net

Jan son of Finn was a wolfhound—not a pet-dog, but a dog whose life was one of labour and hardship and adventure, and his story will fascinate young and old alike. The book was written on the eve of the War, and since then its author has spent long months in the trenches. In his post-war preface he writes: "I have seen some of his kind doing gallant work since then: Red Cross dogs, liaison dogs, and dogs on sentry-go in front-line trenches, who seemed to have the very spirit of France in their bright, stern, unwinking eyes; dogs wounded in action, healed, and back in the fighting line again, more eager than ever to do their bit against the Boche. God bless all their lovable tribe, and all the good fellows who care for them so affectionately and win such unswerving devotion from them. I hope Jan may speak worthily for them to many hearts."

Published by **CONSTABLE & CO. Ltd.**

10 Orange Street

London W.C. 2

*A book that will prove a delight
to all lovers of animals*

THOMPSON. An Autobiography

With a Frontispiece Portrait

In Paper, 1/- net; cloth gilt, 2/- net

Thompson was a dog—a fox terrier, and all who love dogs will love Thompson as soon as they see his photograph, and they will love to read of his full and happy and varied life as it is set down in these pages.

“A quite delightful dog autobiography . . . realising with much skill both the humour and the pathos of which the subject is capable.”—*Times*.

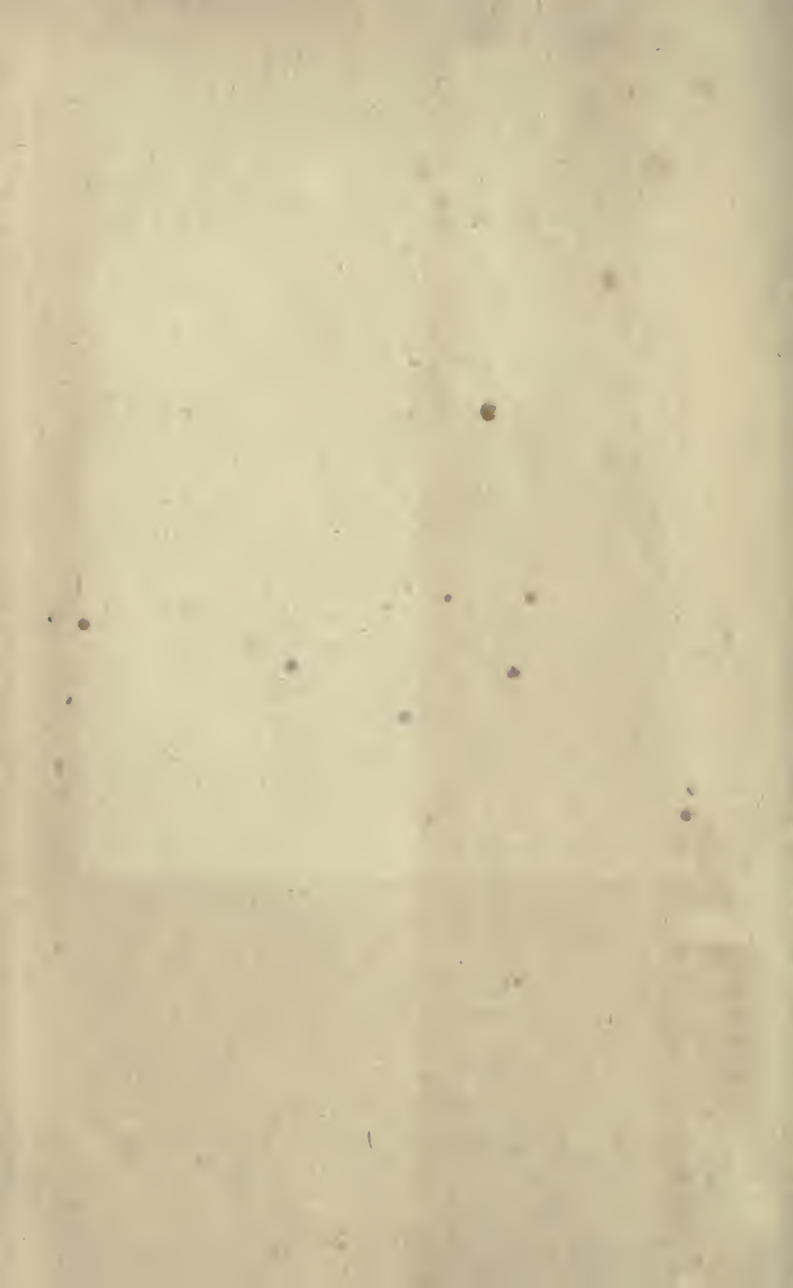
“Charmingly and graphically written, may be confidently recommended to all lovers of dogs.”—*Bookseller*.

“In these reminiscences he shows that ‘a dog’s life’ can be a very different thing from what the phrase generally suggests.”—*Spectator*.

“He was a staunch friend, a great fighter, and an honest gentleman; and of few humans can as much be said.”—*Field*.

Published by CONSTABLE & CO. Ltd.
10 Orange Street **London W.C. 2**





YB 33074

M134725

961
J31
pot

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

